

# ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

The Independent Committee's Review of Racism and  
Discrimination in the Greater Toronto Hockey League

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Special thanks to Jasmine Bhimani and Dr. Wendy Cukier, Mohamed Elmi, and  
Vathsala Illesinghe for their timely and significant contribution

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Greater Toronto Hockey League Independent Committee acknowledges that its work and all hockey in the region takes place on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. The Committee's work takes into account principles of reconciliation outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and aims to make the Greater Toronto Hockey League and hockey at large a welcoming and conciliatory space for Indigenous peoples.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

The Greater Toronto Hockey League (“GTHL”) is the largest and oldest amateur hockey league in the world with a long cultural history serving the most densely populated region in Canada. Along the way it established itself as a global leader in developing talented, young hockey players. This is no accident. It is the result of the critical mass of Toronto as a long-time passionate hockey city in the most passionate hockey country in the world and the efforts of thousands of participants and volunteers. The City of Toronto and generation after generation of players are so very fortunate.

One thing that is certain is that everything eventually changes, and the GTHL is now at a crossroads. Over the past decade the swelling population base of its catchment area has rapidly grown to make Toronto the most multicultural city in the world while the league’s participation numbers are declining. This is inconsistent with the growing hockey participation numbers in other parts of North America and the world. Commensurately there has been a major shift in the demand for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) initiatives at all levels of our society followed by formulation and execution of EDI initiatives at a rapid pace.

The GTHL was an early adaptor having spent two years coordinating and executing “The Transition Game” Summit in November 2019 which brought together a diverse group of stakeholders and experts with the purpose of growing and re-imagining the culture of Minor Hockey. A key outcome was a strategic plan of executable actions to convert ideas and concepts into reality and ignite change. One of these actions was the formation of the Independent Committee (the “Committee”), and the ensuing in-depth research and careful analyses that has led to this report.

The Committee was formed in December 2020, with Anastasia Bucsis and Michael Smith appointed as co-chairs, to conduct an independent and systemic review of the GTHL organization relating to several factors, all of which are rooted in issues of EDI. The Committee members brought together a wide range of experiences in the GTHL, hockey, other competitive sports, coaching, parenting, volunteering, and dealing with discrimination and EDI at the personal, sports and academic levels. It is important to note that the Committee was entirely free from GTHL influence and acted as a true independent body.

The Committee outlined clear Terms of Reference to tighten its focus, as follows:

- Examine, report, and provide recommendations in relation to the GTHL’s overarching policies, protocols, and practices, as they relate to racism and discrimination within the organization.

- Examine, report, and provide recommendations in relation to the GTHL's complaint policy and procedure insofar as it relates to allegations of racism and discrimination on and off ice.
- Examine, report, and provide recommendations in relation to the GTHL's educational materials and training.
- Examine, report, and provide recommendations as to how the GTHL can create a safe environment or structure where people can raise their concerns regarding racism and discrimination (including those who are not themselves the subjects of racism or discrimination).
- Examine the history of the organization and what reporting mechanisms or structures are in place, and recommend what kind of reporting should be done, and on what basis.
- Examine the existing leadership structure insofar as it relates to diversity within the organization and provide recommendations.

## Research

The Committee took a multi-approach method in gathering a complete source of information to understand the history, status, culture, structure, operations, issues, and future potential of the GTHL and define EDI specific recommendations. A comprehensive assessment was undertaken that minimized results with unconscious bias. This included the following:

**Town Hall:** A virtual Town Hall meeting was held in the Fall of 2020, providing the GTHL stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, and engage in discussions.

**GTHL Rules, Policies, By-law Review:** The Committee members reviewed in full the GTHL Rule Book ("Rules"), Organizing By-laws ("By-laws") and Policies that were relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference.

**Governance Model Review:** The GTHL's governance structure and strategic plan were assessed including a review of the relevant sections of the By-laws, Rules and Policies and a cross comparison with other relative sports organizations, and a literature review.

**Survey:** The Committee undertook an independent survey of over two thousand and sixty GTHL athletes, team officials, parents, referees, and alumni to assess the GTHL's EDI protocols and practices with results being analyzed and summarized both collectively and within groups.

**Interviews with League Stakeholders:** The Committee met with individuals from the survey who indicated an interest in participating in a subsequent interview to

expand upon perspectives, including those from visible minorities and non-minorities, Indigenous peoples, those with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ folks.

**Focus Groups on Sexism and Gender-Based Discrimination:** The Committee assessed three purposefully sampled focus groups. The focus groups consisted of individuals who had referenced gender inequities in their survey comments. All focus groups were conducted in confidence and with no ability to trace comments back to individuals. Participants had varying backgrounds and involvement within the GTHL, including parents, house league administration, and team officials across the various levels of competition. Participants were asked to share their perspectives on gender as it relates to the GTHL, with the goal of addressing any gap in the assessment of gender in the GTHL.

**External Review, Online Searches and Consultation with Key Personnel:** A literature review and an online search of relevant material was conducted. The Committee examined various sport and non-sport organizations to review their approach to EDI. In addition, key experts such as the X University Diversity Institute were consulted to look for insight on best practices regarding EDI.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (“SWOT”):** The Committee conducted an internal SWOT analysis based upon knowledge of the GTHL’s history, experience and corroboration with interviews and research, to create a baseline understanding of the organization. The analysis was not EDI based, but rather focused on the overall organization. The objective was to gain an understanding of the organization’s capacity to identify and properly address existing problems surrounding EDI, as well as to incorporate EDI initiatives.

The Committee was both specifically assembled and fortunate to have members with multi-disciplinary expertise in each of these research areas that worked collaboratively drawing from each other’s experiences, resources, and critical thinking.

## Findings

After over a year of research, analyses, and Committee meetings to review and discuss, the following findings were determined. These findings lead to the next stage of formulating recommendations for execution and change.

As an overarching conclusion, it is clear that racism, sex, and gender-based discrimination and inequality exist significantly within the GTHL at all levels, for those that identify as BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ or a person with a disability, each perceiving inequality to different degrees. There is often a failure to identify or discipline such discrimination, chalking up verbal abuse to being a ‘part of the game’. It is perpetuated by a culture of complacency on the issue and the relevant inaction of officials to varying degrees.



In the GTHL and youth hockey in Canada overall, the issue is not as much about overt willful discrimination, but rather more about the lack of basic understanding of racism, unconscious biases, and their actual impacts. This ultimately alienates and excludes key demographics in the hockey and greater community. It follows the well-known reality that - the privilege afforded to those *not* in a marginalized group - is often invisible, making it difficult to recognize microaggressions and systemic discrimination.

When coupled with the fact that GTHL participants at every level are, significantly, not representative of the community it serves, this inequity creates an inherent weakness in the organization to identify internal discrimination. This perpetuates an overt and systemic inequity within the GTHL.

There were major themes that emerged during the interviews on the reasons for this weakness, which centered on:

- The lack of EDI education, recall and the need for more humanized education
- The GTHL's culture
- The financial barriers to playing hockey in the GTHL
- The power imbalances with team officials
- The lack of awareness of league operation and makeup of the organization
- The culture of silence and fear of complaining

A further notable finding is that the GTHL policies, rules and guidelines were not identified as being the main issue in addressing EDI concerns. In other words, solely changing the rules, which are often challenged in their enforceability, does *not* solve the problem. More substantial action is required for effective change.

Survey results indicated that, while the GTHL is deemed to be fulfilling its mission of promoting and governing organized minor hockey including the recognition of EDI and growing the game, their efforts at creating a culture of acceptance and inclusivity ranked poorly. There is also a concern about the lack of equality in the complaint process and the effectiveness of current policies as a deterrent to racist/discriminatory behaviour both on and off the ice, in arenas, and in the long term.

The single most consistent and repeated issue that arose was the concern, real or perceived, that youth hockey was excessively expensive. This is often coupled with the belief that costs charged by clubs or teams at the competitive levels are often inappropriately or unnecessarily high.

While the GTHL continues to work through its traditional tools and initiatives to become more welcoming and representative of the diverse community it serves, the organization must create and implement structural and educational changes. These changes need to be constituted and executed in a way that raises awareness and modifies behaviours that support EDI and allows the GTHL to become more culturally relevant and welcoming among a rapidly growing diverse population. Without this evolution the GTHL will have difficulty maintaining its position or further succeeding.

Educational programs should be at the foundation of this mandate to counter the lack of understanding of the GTHL's current participants at all levels and modify behaviour. For the education to be memorable and impactful, the approach and content must be rooted in relevance and importance to all stakeholders, have global appeal, and be directed towards a diverse population. Given the incredible advances in online education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not surprising that the expectation of high production quality training should be the norm. An engaging modular training program should address:

- Why EDI is important to success in hockey (and life)
- Current challenges and experiences of racism and discrimination in hockey
- Key concepts around EDI — where bias comes from and how it is manifested
- Ways in which individuals can take action to help create a more inclusive game
- A pledge or call to action

To ensure continued relevance and future growth the GTHL needs to develop a strong, intentional EDI mandate to support change and create a culture of respect. This is in keeping with EDI initiatives that are currently occurring in business, social, and political spheres across Canada.

From this research the Committee was tasked with formulating recommendations to effect constructive modifications and initiatives for the GTHL. These fell within the categories of Structure & Organization, Governance, Culture & Coaching, Disputes & Resolution, Education, and Communications and Connections.

## Recommendations

While this is a fulsome set of recommendations, they have been carefully assembled and reflect a similar range of modifications and initiatives being undertaken at multiple levels of our society, from business and politics to recreational and community organizations. The Committee recognizes that there may be issues with capacity and resources, and thus these recommendations are meant to be implemented in staged phases, through consistent and clear efforts.

As a first step, the Committee was asked to provide recommendations on Governance in advance of the full report, which is part of the final collection of recommendations outlined below. This included changes to the make-up of the GTHL Board to include a certain percentage of directors from visible minority groups that represent large portions of the GTA population. This recommendation was accepted and implemented by a strongly supported motion of its Members in the summer of 2021.

It should be noted that in addition to the following recommendations, the Committee encourages the GTHL to mandate, or at least strongly encourage its Members to formulate new governance rules to:

- Adopt the Board Governance rules recently passed and enacted by the GTHL Board to appoint diverse Board Members and Officers, and;
- Expand their Membership with voting rights to a broader set of people who are active with the Organization in one form or another.

We encourage you to read the full set of recommendations and their associated justifications in the report as well as the Draft Proposals of Change to the GTHL By-laws and Rules. They are followed in the Appendix by suggested implementation strategies and templates for some of the key recommendations.

## **Structure & Organization**

1. Hire a qualified staff member experienced in EDI initiatives.
2. Utilize a scorecard as a measurement tool and ensure that the criteria are adhered to.
3. Form a Diversity Committee.
4. Ensure financial transparency – direct each club and team to provide transparency in costs.
5. Develop and implement strategies to measure the success of EDI programs.

## **Governance**

6. Mandate that a minimum of 30% of BIPOC individuals are elected to the Board of Directors.
7. Mandate that a minimum of 40% of female individuals are elected to the Board of Directors.
8. Mandate that the Nominations Committee works to its full potential leading into the Annual General Meetings (AGM).
9. Mandate that the Nominations Committee be educated about EDI and intersectionality.
10. Mandate that the list of nominees includes BIPOC individuals.
11. Mandate that the list of nominees includes individuals who identify as female.
12. Mandate that the Nominations Committee proactively communicates with the GTHL's stakeholders (clubs, divisions, teams) to highlight and introduce the future Board electees no later than a month prior to the league's AGM.
13. Strongly recommend that Members include BIPOC and female representation requirements in their By-laws and Club Policies, over the course of two years.
14. Mandate that of the BIPOC individuals elected to the Board, at least one occupies a Vice President position within three years of the release of this report.

15. Mandate that the existing President mentor the BIPOC Vice President.
16. Mandate that the length of the term of the Vice President be changed to three years.
17. Mandate the Nominations Committee to proactively recruit future Board electees based upon skill sets that are aligned with the GTHL's strategic plan.

### **Culture & Coaching**

18. Develop and implement a more robust, consistent, and structured screening procedures for those interested in coaching.
19. Ensure that Members are recruiting and appointing BIPOC team officials with diverse skill sets.
20. Create and implement a BIPOC Coaching Mentorship program.
21. Recruit, train, and provide opportunities for women in the GTHL.

### **Disputes & Resolution**

22. Create an anonymous hotline/ombudsperson's office for people to report discriminatory actions.
23. Review incident reports where racial slurs are alleged to have been used but not heard.
24. Introduce a transparent reporting system that follows and tracks the number of complaints (for all stakeholders, *i.e.*, for team officials, parents, and athletes).
25. Implement a zero-tolerance policy regarding discriminatory language and behaviour that applies to everyone (including spectators) to at least the same standard regarding discriminatory language as athletes are held.
26. Create an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process for complaints that is populated by a rotating panel of volunteers who are qualified in ADR.
27. Introduce sanctions for repeat offenders that go beyond penalties and suspensions.

### **Education**

28. Re-imagine its approach to education.
29. Create and execute an educational program for all stakeholders including players, parents, coaches, clubs, referees, Staff and Board, on the shift in culture and initiatives on racism and EDI.

30. Implement a mandatory educational peer training session that is delivered by a member of the team to the rest of the team.
31. Organize and implement an EDI speaker series led by significant GTHL/Hockey Alumni.
32. Implement mandatory EDI training sessions for parent representatives, requiring all stakeholders to engage in a minimum of two sessions with the content over the course of the season.
33. Create a sub-committee that reviews and measures the current EDI education's impact.
34. Pair suspensions with mandatory EDI education modules.
35. Mandate the implementation of safe spaces in all facilities or locations for women and non-binary individuals.

### **Communications & Connections**

36. Create and implement a strong communications plan to support EDI messaging throughout the league.
37. Implement a public relations campaign to improve the outlook towards hockey, and demonstrate positive changes in terms of addressing racism and systemic issues.
38. Create a league-wide event that engages all stakeholders prior to the commencement of the competitive season.
39. Create an award that recognizes the contributions made by a player, coach, and team in promoting EDI values.
40. Partner and strategize with external organizations that are currently working with historically marginalized communities in finding financial solutions that will facilitate their participation in hockey.
41. Host an annual town hall regarding EDI.
42. Create and implement an EDI Parent Representative Initiative.
43. Identify and strategize with external organizations that are currently working with historically underrepresented and underserved communities to be introduced to the game of hockey.
44. Eliminate ethnic or stereotypical mascots or imagery from teams and clubs.

### **Limitations**

In every investigation there are limitations, the Committee's investigation was no different. Best practices were strived for in this analysis, however, there are some limitations that should be noted.

- The survey did not specifically ask questions related to gender. It is recommended that the GTHL provide a follow-up survey to better assess this issue. The results could provide insight as it relates to participation.
- Due to the scope of this project and time constraints, a small sample of stakeholders participated in the interviews and focus groups. The results provided cannot be generalized.
- Many of the Committee members are not academic researchers and did not have all the resources and data necessary to complete an academic-level peer-reviewed research study. This study is more professional in nature, and readers must be aware that the checks and balances performed here are not to the calibre of a university study.
- Some bias may appear in the survey and focus group questions, due to the limited time provided to apply research methods to some of these studies.
- Cultural bias may also appear in the form of sample selection bias, as response to the survey was voluntary. Subsequently, comments on the survey were voluntary and the focus groups were selected by the co-chairs of the Committee.
- Selection bias may also apply to interviews with stakeholders, the survey responses, and focus groups, as these were people who indicated that they had an interest in being contacted.
- Many other issues arose in the responses to the survey, including concerns with cost, professionalism and other topics which do not concern EDI. The Committee did not follow up with respondents to the survey who were not interested in EDI concerns. To fulfill its mandate as closely as possible, the Committee concentrated on respondents to the survey who expressed concerns with discrimination in the GTHL.
- Surveys went out to a distribution list which included GTHL alumni, parents, team officials and other stakeholders. There were parents and players, formerly of the GTHL, who opted to not participate in the process. The Committee decided to not engage individuals who were not on this distribution list, in the interest of conserving resources, and for fear of inserting further selection bias into the sample. In follow up reports, the GTHL may choose to investigate this issue, and directly address those who have left the GTHL.

## Conclusion

There is longstanding evidence that diversity in a broad range of settings helps everyone's performance and improves outcomes. This applies to the GTHL. The more it looks like the community it is serving, the more effective and successful the GTHL will be on multiple levels. EDI also leads to greater partnership and sponsorship opportunities that can help hockey become more affordable and offer broader opportunities for all and helps avoid reputational risk.

Hockey is a fast, physical, and highly competitive game that has developed in Canada and the GTHL at world class levels. It has a deservedly proud culture that represents Canada's personality to work hard and successfully compete in a physical, tough environment. The time has now come to ensure that respect and EDI are interwoven and displayed at all levels. This will lead to an admired source of pride that attracts multicultural participation. It will foster camaraderie and dignity. And it will be passed down to the next generation that will enhance and generate even greater participation and competitive levels that will drive Canada's national game to new heights.

The GTHL is an internationally respected hockey league that has the critical mass, history, and quality to truly become world leading in all of its operations. The face of Canada is changing, and 'Canada's Game' must change if it wants to continue to be regarded proudly as the country's pastime. The GTHL has a fantastic opportunity to be leading that change, ensuring hockey truly is for everyone, and an icon of Canadian culture that demonstrates a culture of equality and respect.

## CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION

### Setting The Stage

*"Sports does not so much mirror society - it is integral to the functioning of society."*

*Dr. Harry Edwards*

The GTHL has a long history of understanding the value of sport, and the role that hockey plays in Canadian culture. Hockey, like many sports, has become more than a game or a forum for entertainment. Hockey has the power to bring diverse people and families together to learn, build communities, and strengthen relationships. Participation in hockey is more than just learning the game. Broad research consistently shows that participation in sports is linked to the development of valuable life and career skills including teamwork, sportsmanship, and learning to deal with adversity. Participation in hockey is more than just learning the game, it has the power to change the trajectory of one's life.

The GTHL was founded in 1911 by then-17-year-old Frank D. Smith and is the largest and oldest amateur hockey league in the world. It serves the most densely populated region in Canada with a long cultural history of being passionate about hockey. Additionally, it is recognized throughout North America and the World as a leader in developing talented, young hockey players.

However, in the past few years, the GTHL has found itself at a crossroads. It became evident that while the population base of its catchment area was rapidly growing, the league's participation numbers were declining. This was inconsistent with the growing hockey participation numbers in other parts of the world including the United States and Europe, where the quality of international play has been increasing significantly. Some articles were released recently, indicating a culture of racism in the GTHL, lack of transparency in operations, and significant cultural challenges. This reflects a larger issue of systemic racism in Canadian society.

The GTHL has recognized the interconnection and consequence of these issues for several years. In November 2019, the GTHL organized and hosted a high profile and ambitious multi-day summit, "The Transition Game". The summit brought together a diverse group of stakeholders and experts with the purpose of growing and bettering hockey in Canada. "The Transition Game" focused on how to create a united approach in re-imagining the culture of Minor Hockey, including a focus on EDI. This all-encompassing initiative focused on five pillars: The Game, The Community, The Organizations, Stewardship and Governance. A key outcome was a strategic plan of executable actions to convert ideas and concepts into reality and ignite change. One of these actions was the formation of the Committee, and the ensuing in-depth research and careful analyses that has led to this report.

The Committee, formed in December 2020 by co-chairs Anastasia Bucsis and Michael Smith, was created with the purpose of conducting an independent and systemic review of the GTHL organization relating to several factors, all of which are rooted in issues pertaining to EDI.

This report is dedicated to presenting and expanding upon the Committee's findings, recommendations, and how they were derived. The findings have been organized into three main categories: governance, education, and culture.

The Committee conducted an extensive review that encompassed the collection of data through a survey, interviews, focus groups and a townhall meeting. Through the Committee's work, three main findings emerged:



- Racism and discrimination exist within the GTHL.
- While racism is often associated with overt behaviour, it is often exhibited as discriminations and microaggressions that are difficult to recognize for individuals not within minority groups, which is the larger issue in the GTHL. Privilege is often invisible and at times, limits one's ability to identify instances of discrimination. Further training and education are needed.
- Though the GTHL's rules and regulations clearly deal with racism and discrimination, the nature of the rules and penalties are not effective enough to deal with the issues, and do not utilize their full potential. Additional structures need to be put in place to ensure the GTHL serves the community in which it operates, promotes a culture of respect, and makes hockey a welcoming space for all.

The Committee recognizes the outstanding work and level of expertise that the GTHL brings by effectively providing thousands of youths the opportunity to learn and play hockey at every level. Now is the moment for the GTHL to reach its full potential by providing the opportunity for everyone to fall in love with 'Canada's Game' while also playing a leadership role for other similar leagues looking to address EDI proactively and effectively. To do this successfully, certain structures must be systemically established and acted upon. Every stakeholder in the league needs to recognize their agency in helping move the 'EDI' puck down the ice, ensuring that the GTHL is not just focused on creating hockey players, but rather, upstanding human beings who play hockey.

There is longstanding evidence that diversity in a broad range of settings helps everyone's performance and improves outcomes. The more the GTHL looks like the community it is serving, the more effective and successful it will be on multiple levels. EDI also aligns with sponsorship opportunities that can help hockey become more affordable for all and helps avoid reputational risk by ensuring everyone's voices are heard. More than this, EDI ensures that the sport of hockey truly is for everyone. The GTHL is an internationally respected hockey league that has the critical mass, history, and quality to truly become world leading in all its operations. The face of Canada is changing, and 'Canada's Game' must change if it wants to continue to be regarded as the country's pastime. The GTHL has an excellent opportunity to be leading that change, ensuring hockey truly is for everyone, and an icon of Canadian culture that demonstrates a culture of respect.

## Meet The Committee

The makeup of the Committee was critical as Members needed to represent a wide range of experiences that relate to the different realities of hockey culture. While having a sports background was important, so was experience with coaching, parenting, volunteering, and real-life experience dealing with discrimination. In addition, representation that brought academic-level EDI knowledge was crucial to

ensuring that the Committee could put the conversation and the recommendations into context. After the search, the co-chairs were able to build a committee that met all the aforementioned needs. While perspectives and worldviews were divergent, the commonality across all contributors was a passion for youth sport and a belief that EDI is essential to hockey's growth and survival.

It is important to note that the Committee was entirely free from GTHL influence and acted as a true independent body. This was imperative in providing objective recommendations without bias or input from the GTHL itself. The Committee Members had no immediate connection to the GTHL during the research, reporting and drafting of this report. In addition, the Committee members drafted their own Terms of Reference to guide the scope and focus of their work.

Throughout this process, some of the Committee struggled to understand a hockey culture that, in many ways, was rooted in an insular community that was slow to change. Meanwhile, the world was changing quickly, and EDI was impacting everything from corporate Boards to social media. The Committee does not intend to present something new in concept in this report, nor is it ahead of the curve in relation to other organizations. Here, the Committee is making important recommendations to ensure that the GTHL can survive and thrive in the world in which it operates. Access to hockey and a safe and welcoming culture is what should be expected and delivered from the GTHL — and all youth sporting organizations — moving forward.

#### **Co-chair: Michael Smith**

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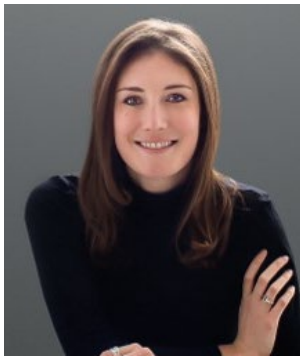
Michael is a partner at LMS Lawyers in Ottawa, practicing in Criminal, Civil and Sports Law. He is a Professor at Carleton University where he teaches second, third, and fourth-year law. Michael was an alternate on the Canadian Olympic Team and a Member of the Canadian National Wrestling Team for six years. He is the former President of Athletes CAN, the association of Canada's national team athletes. Michael was lead counsel for Team Canada at the Commonwealth, Pan Am, Francophonie and Olympic Games.

Michael is a sports leader in Canada, working on behalf of athletes and sport organizations. Michael is an Arbitrator presiding over sport disputes involving code of conduct

violations, team selection, and harassment. Michael is also a Member of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada Investigations Unit. He is one of twenty-five independent investigators in Canada dealing with sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination cases.

### **Co-chair: Anastasia Bucsis**

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Anastasia Bucsis is a two-time Olympian in long track speed skating and was the only athlete from North America to publicly come out in opposition of Russia's anti-2SLGBTQIA+ laws prior to Sochi 2014. Since then, she has been a passionate advocate for mental health initiatives for athletes, alongside eliminating homophobia and discrimination in sport. She became involved with the GTHL during the Transition Game in November of 2019. Anastasia graduated from the University of Calgary with a Communications and Culture degree. She is a sports journalist.

### **Justice Harry S. LaForme**

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Justice Harry S. LaForme is Anishinaabe, and a Member of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation located in southern Ontario. Justice LaForme graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School in 1977 and was called to the Ontario Bar in 1979. He practiced and specialized in Indigenous law. In January 1994 he was appointed a judge of the Superior Court of Justice, Ontario. In November 2004 he was appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal. He is the first indigenous person to be appointed to any appellate court in the history of Canada. He retired in 2018.

Justice LaForme served as co-chair of the independent National Chiefs Task Force on Native Land Claims; Chief Commissioner of the Indian Commission of Ontario; Chair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Land Claims; and

taught the "Rights of Indigenous Peoples" at Osgoode Hall Law School. Justice LaForme has written and published numerous articles on issues related to Indigenous law and justice.

### **Leigh Felesky**

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Leigh Felesky is a former figure skating coach and competitor who, having developed and managed a physical disability later in life, is passionate about accessibility and highlighting the value of finding diverse and inclusive ways of solving problems. She is the parent of three teenagers who play competitive basketball. Her academic background includes teaching courses in race, class, and gender to undergraduate students at Oregon State University, as well as 12 years as a journalism instructor at X University in Toronto. Professionally, Leigh is a journalist currently working in the finance industry with a focus on education and literacy.

### **Dr. Nicole Forrester**

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Dr. Nicole Forrester is an Assistant Professor in the Sport Media program in the RTA School of Media at The Creative School. Her current work includes the athlete's perspective (e.g., athlete-centeredness, intersectionality of race and gender, and the media) and the psychosocial factors associated with the development and achievement of super elite performances. Dr. Forrester received her Ph.D. in Sport Psychology from Michigan State University, her Master of Education from the University of Texas in Exercise and Sport Psychology, and her Bachelor of Science and Art in Movement Science and Sport Management and Communication, respectively, from the University of Michigan. In addition to Dr. Forrester's scholarly pursuits, she is an Olympian, and an 8-Time Canadian Champion who has represented Canada on 20 national teams. She is a Commonwealth Games gold and bronze medalist, and a Pan American Games silver and bronze medalist, and was recently inducted into the Athletics Ontario Hall of Fame.

## **Andrew Kidd**

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Andrew Kidd is a lawyer by background and executive with a major Canadian real estate company. He played varsity sports in university and has been involved in youth development and sports at the Board and coaching level over his career. Andrew has been an avid spectator of his son's path through the GTHL who now plays in the OJHL.

As a previous Board Member of the GTHL and Chair of the Marketing & Communications Committee, Andrew co-led the initiative to change the culture of youth hockey which resulted in the Transition Game. As a Member of the Transition Game Committee, the need for an Independent Committee to address issues of racism and EDI in the GTHL emerged. Andrew hopes that this process will shift the culture of youth hockey to be forward thinking, inclusive, and growing again as a consummately Canadian pursuit at the multicultural grass roots level of Canada.

## **Karl Subban**

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Karl Subban is a lifelong educator, hockey dad, author, inspirational speaker, and principal of Everest Academy. Karl believes that one's greatest gift is one's potential, and one's greatest gift to the world is the development of that potential. That's true for parents, teachers, and team officials, and it is valid for the children they are parenting, teaching, and coaching. Karl coached in the GTHL for over ten years, and his three sons played in the league before being drafted by NHL teams. The Subbans' participation in the game worked to define their family and allowed them to fulfill their potential on many levels.

Through the heightened attention on equity, diversity and inclusion, Karl learned that one must broaden access to the game to impact thousands of families, especially from the BIPOC community. The initiatives the Committee recommends serve as their commitment to making the GTHL more inclusive, equitable and welcoming. Everyone deserves an opportunity to participate and to play the beloved game of hockey.

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## Our Purpose

The Committee outlined clear Terms of Reference to tighten its focus, throughout its work. These terms are as follows:

- Examine, report, and provide recommendations in relation to the GTHL's overarching policies, protocols, and practices, as they relate to racism and discrimination within the organization
- Examine, report, and provide recommendations in relation to the GTHL's complaint policy and procedure insofar as it relates to allegations of racism and discrimination on and off the ice
- Examine, report, and provide recommendations in relation to the GTHL's educational materials and training
- Examine, report, and provide recommendations as to how the GTHL can create a safe environment or structure where people can raise their concerns regarding racism and discrimination (including those who are not themselves the subjects of racism or discrimination)
- Examine the history of the organization and what reporting mechanisms or structures are in place, and recommend what kind of reporting should be done, and on what basis
- Examine the existing leadership structure insofar as it relates to diversity within the organization and provide recommendations.

The initial research and findings of both the Transition Game process and the Committee's work highlighted the importance of fast tracking the recommendations on the Governance of the GTHL. To that end, the Committee was asked to provide recommendations on Governance in the Spring of 2021, which is interwoven in this final report, in advance of the full report. The Committee carefully considered and recommended changes to the make-up of the GTHL Board to include a certain percentage of Board Members from visible minority groups that represent large portions of the GTA population. The Board must represent the community that it serves. This recommendation was accepted and implemented by a strongly supported motion of its Board Members in the summer of 2021.

With this initial recommendation put into action, the Committee is now providing further recommendations and investigation to fulfil its mandate. The Committee hopes that this process will shift the culture of youth hockey to be increasingly forward-thinking, inclusive, and played respectfully. The Committee also hopes that this will allow youth hockey to grow and flourish as a Canadian pastime, particularly at a grassroots level, within the GTHL's catchment area.

## Timeline of Events

The following timeline is meant to provide insight and transparency into the process of coming together, researching, and creating the report and recommendations. As the Committee's work took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that most of this work was conducted virtually.

Ongoing	Consulted with the NHL regarding EDI work currently in place.
June 2020	Town Hall announced, for players, parents, team officials and other stakeholders, to examine issues of racism and discrimination in the GTHL.
July 2020	Michael Smith and Anastasia Bucsis appointed as co-chairs of the Independent Committee on Racism and Discrimination.
September 2020	Town Hall held — 120 minutes, virtual.
December 2020	Committee Members are selected by Smith and Bucsis, and GTHL Independent Committee formal work begins.
January 2021	Finalized Independent Committee's Terms of Reference.
February 2021	GTHL issues a statement on the Independent Committee, publicly announcing the chairs and Members of the Committee.
March 2021	Connected with experts from X University Diversity Institute to consult on tactics and strategies for the Committee. Reviewed benefits of having a diverse Board based on research with the Institute.
March 2021	Interviewed key governance stakeholders.
April 2021	Connected with representatives from Hockey Canada to discuss the organization's process when restructuring their Board of Directors.
March 2021 to April 2021	Drafted interim report with a focus on Governance.
April 2021	GTHL Independent Committee Interim Report submitted to GTHL Board of Directors for review.



June 2021	Surveyed GTHL alumni, staff, players, and parents to gain insight as to the current EDI landscape of the organization.
July 2021	<p>New GTHL Board of directors elected, based on recommendations by the Committee to include more diverse voices in executive positions.</p> <p>Prema Thiele, Cyril Bollers, and Darren Lowe are all elected as BIPOC Members of the Board.</p>
August 2021	Hockey Canada announces Maltreatment playing rule, informing GTHL IC policy review. The Maltreatment policy established a disciplinary structure in line with EDI values.
November 2021	Consulted with MLSE to aid with Final EDI Report.
November 2021	Conducted interviews and focus groups with parents, alumni and GTHL stakeholders who responded to the survey.
March 2022	Released Independent Committee Final Report

## Glossary of Terms

There are terms that arose throughout this process that relate to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The Committee suggests that the reader becomes familiar with these definitions.

### **Ally**

"Allyship is a process, and everyone has more to learn. Allyship involves a lot of listening. Sometimes, people say "doing ally work" or "acting in solidarity with" to reference the fact that "ally" is not an identity, it is an ongoing and lifelong process that involves a lot of work.

One type of ally is a white ally. A white ally acknowledges the limits of her/his/their knowledge about other people's experiences but does not use that as a reason not to think and/or act. A white ally does not remain silent but confronts racism as it comes up daily, seeks to deconstruct it institutionally and live in a way that challenges systemic oppression, at the risk of experiencing some of that oppression. Being a white ally entails building relationships with People of Colour, and with white people to challenge them in their thinking about race. White allies do not have it all figured out, but are committed to non-complacency."<sup>i</sup>

### **Bias**

1. Partiality: an inclination or predisposition for or against something
2. Any tendency or preference, such as a response bias or test bias.
3. Systematic error arising during sampling, data collection, or data analysis. See biased estimator; biased sampling."<sup>ii</sup>

### **BIPOC**

"BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. Pronounced "bye-pock," this is a term specific to the United States and Canada, intended to centre the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of colour."<sup>iii</sup>

### **Discrimination**

"Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age or sexual orientation."<sup>iv</sup>

### **Diversity**

"When describing people and population groups, diversity can include such factors as age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion, as well as education, livelihood, and marital status."<sup>v</sup>

### **EDI**

"Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) is a term used to describe programs and policies that encourage representation and participation of diverse groups of people, including people of different genders, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, religions, cultures, ages, and sexual orientations and people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skills and expertise. It is an expansion of the term "diversity and inclusion" (D&I) to reflect the growing focus on equity in organizations. EDI is not just a "feel-good" initiative. Research has found that having diverse viewpoints at all levels of an organization improves financial results, organizational and team performance, innovation, and other areas of the business."<sup>vi</sup>

### **Equity-Seeking Groups**

Equity-seeking groups are communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social, and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities, and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Gender Identity**

One's self-identification as male, female, or non-binary regardless of their sex assigned at birth. Gender identity is influenced by both environmental and biological factors. Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.

"Although the dominant approach in psychology for many years had been to regard gender identity as residing in individuals, the important influence of societal structures, cultural expectations, and personal interactions in its development is now recognized as well. Significant evidence now exists to support the conceptualization of gender identity as influenced by both environmental and biological factors."<sup>viii</sup>

### **Inclusion**

"Inclusion is seen as a universal human right. The aim of inclusion is to embrace all people irrespective of race, gender, disability, medical or other needs. It is about giving equal access and opportunities and getting rid of discrimination and intolerance (removal of barriers). It affects all aspects of public life."<sup>ix</sup>

### **Intersectionality**

"The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage."<sup>x</sup>

### **Member**

Applicants - including individuals, corporations, and other entities - admitted to Membership in the GTHL from time to time by a resolution of the Board. For this

report, we also use the word 'member' in reference to Independent Committee members, and members of equity-seeking groups.

### **Micro-aggressions**

"Brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or situational indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights or insults, especially toward members of minority or oppressed groups. Microaggression may be intentional or implicit. Three subtypes have been identified: **micro assaults**, which are purposefully discriminatory actions (e.g., uttering a racial slur, displaying a swastika); **microinsults**, which are subtle snubs that devalue a person's identity; and **microinvalidations**, which are unintentional exclusions or negations of an individual's thoughts, feelings, or experiences. Research on microaggression is limited but shows that this form of bias can cause recipients to feel that they are abnormal, inferior, invisible, powerless, or untrustworthy."<sup>xi</sup>

### **Privilege**

"A right or benefit that is given to some people and not to others."<sup>xii</sup> Here, privilege includes inherent advantages possessed by a person based on their race, gender, socio-economic status, etc. in a society characterized by inequality and injustice.

### **Racism**

"Racism is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on physical properties such as skin color and hair texture."<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Systemic Racism**

"Racial discrimination can result from individual behaviour as well as because of the unintended and often unconscious consequences of a discriminatory system. This is known as systemic discrimination. Systemic discrimination can be described as patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage for racialized persons."<sup>xiv</sup>

### **Unconscious biases**

"Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing. Unconscious bias is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and is often incompatible with one's conscious values. Certain scenarios can activate unconscious attitudes and beliefs. For example, biases may be more prevalent when multi-tasking or working under time pressure."<sup>xv</sup>

### **Visible Minority:**

As defined by Statistics Canada, visible minorities are "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour."<sup>xvi</sup>

### **2SLGBTQIA+:**

Those who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit, Intersex or Asexual.<sup>xvii</sup>

## CHAPTER 2 — METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

A multi-approach method was applied to scan the environment. The Committee gathered information from various sources in preparation of this report; in doing so, the Committee had a rich and complete source of information to help identify and define the recommendations that are set out in Chapter 5. A comprehensive assessment was developed while minimizing results with unconscious bias. Data was collected using the following methods:

- Direct observation
- Survey
- Interviewing
- Consultations with people in key positions and with specific knowledge
- Online search
- Literature review

### A. Town Hall

A virtual Town Hall meeting was held in Fall 2020, providing GTHL stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, and engage in discussions, moderated by the co-chair of the Committee, Michael Smith. During the 120-minute virtual discussion, stakeholders had the opportunity to share their experiences with EDI in the GTHL. Thoughts, experiences, and opinions were captured and analyzed for content.

### B. Governance Model Review

The GTHL's governance structure and strategic plan were assessed with a governance reform objective. The Rules and By-laws of the organization, as well as the existing governance model of the GTHL and its stakeholders were assessed. Key officials and stakeholders of the GTHL were interviewed, evaluating their perspectives of the GTHL's governance structure and strategic plan. Additionally, a cross comparison of the GTHL's governance structure with relative sports organizations was conducted, as well as a literature review. Based on the results, recommendations were provided and implemented.

### C. GTHL Rules and By-law Review

Analyses began with the Committee Members familiarizing themselves with the GTHL and its overarching philosophy that directs and informs the organization and its stakeholders. The mission statement, as well as the Rules and By-laws of the organization were reviewed and examined.

#### D. Survey

GTHL athletes, team officials, parents, referees, and alumni (within the last 5 years) associated with the GTHL were contacted and asked to participate in a survey, which was conducted over a three-week period. Two thousand and sixty-two parents, players, alumni, coaches, and stakeholders completed the survey assessing the GTHL's EDI protocols and practices with the aim of making hockey a safe and welcoming place for everyone. Results were analyzed, both collectively and within group analysis.

#### E. Interviews with key league stakeholders

Individuals who completed the survey and indicated an interest in being contacted were purposely sampled to participate in a subsequent interview to expand upon perspectives and recommended solutions. All interviews were conducted in confidence and with no ability to trace comments back to individuals. Participants who identified as visible minority, Indigenous peoples, those with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ folks, and non-minorities were invited to participate in an interview.

#### F. Focus groups on Sexism and Gender-Based Discrimination

The Committee assessed three purposefully sampled focus groups. The focus groups consisted of individuals who had referenced gender inequities in their survey comments. All focus groups were conducted in confidence and with no ability to trace comments back to individuals. Participants had varying backgrounds and involvement within the GTHL, including parents, house league administration, and team officials across the various levels of competition. Virtual interviews were conducted with the focus groups, with a semi-structured interview guide. Participants were asked to share their perspectives on gender as it relates to the GTHL, with the goal of addressing any gap in the assessment of gender in the GTHL.

#### G. External Review, Online Searches and Consultation with Key Personnel

A literature review and an online search of relevant material was conducted. The Committee examined the EDI of various sports and non-sports organizations to review their approach to EDI. In addition, key experts such as the X University Diversity Institute were consulted to look for insight on best practices regarding EDI.

#### H. Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

The Committee conducted an internal SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis based upon knowledge of the GTHL's history, experience and corroboration with interviews and research, to create a baseline understanding of the organization. The analysis was not EDI based, but rather focused on the overall organization. This objective was to gain an understanding of the organization's capacity to identify and properly address existing problems surrounding EDI, as well as to incorporate EDI initiatives.



## CHAPTER 3 — FINDINGS

After conducting the research and review outlined above, results and analysis from a cross section of investigation showed it was evident that racism and discrimination exist within the GTHL at all levels and that there is work to be done to adequately address the concerns that were expressed. In short, greater efforts must be made in EDI to achieve success within the entire organization.

The results show that people who do not identify as a BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ or a person with a disability largely do not perceive the existence of inequalities to the same degree. The Committee also conducted targeted focus groups addressing gender to show a similar theme: gender and sex-based discrimination exists within the GTHL, and at times there is a failure to identify or discipline such discrimination, chalking verbal abuse up to 'chirping' and being a 'part of the game.' This is perpetuated by all officials to varying degrees, and there is a culture of complacency in the organization. This ultimately alienates and excludes key demographics in the hockey community. This finding follows the well-known reality that serves as the foundation of many EDI discussions: privilege — in this case the privilege afforded to those not in a marginalized group — is often invisible and makes it difficult for one to recognize microaggressions and systemic discrimination. In the case of the GTHL and youth hockey in Canada overall, it is not as much about overt willful discrimination, but more a lack of basic understanding of racism, unconscious biases, and their actual impacts.

When coupled with the fact that participants in the GTHL at every level are, significantly, not representative of the community it serves, this inequity creates an inherent weakness of the organization to identify internal discrimination. This perpetuates an overt and systemic inequity within the GTHL.

A further notable finding is the perception that the GTHL policies, rules and guidelines were not identified as being the main issue when it came to addressing issues pertaining to EDI. In other words, solely changing the rules and guidelines, which are often challenged in their enforceability, are perceived to not solve the problem. More substantial action is required for effective change.

Additionally, based on the survey results, participants perceived that the GTHL is fulfilling its mission promoting and governing organized minor hockey for youths, and participants recognized its role in governing hockey rules and regulations, community engagement, training, education, promoting a culture of EDI, and investing and growing the game in the Greater Toronto Area ("GTA"). However, their efforts at promoting a culture of acceptance and inclusivity and investments in house leagues were ranked poorly. Largely, GTHL participants are aware of and have access to the current policies and the rulebook for the most part. However, there is less equality in the complaint procedure with more members of the equity-seeking group feeling it is not easy to submit a complaint against the league. Moreover, members of the equity-seeking group do not believe the current policies are a deterrent to racist/discriminatory behaviour on the ice or in the long term.

While the GTHL continues to work through its traditional tools and initiatives to become more welcoming and representative of the diverse community it serves, the organization must put structural and educational changes in place. These changes will serve to raise awareness and modify behaviours in a way that supports EDI, while aiding the GTHL to become more culturally relevant among a growing diverse population and thereby welcoming a broader community. Without this evolution, the GTHL will have difficulty maintaining its position and further succeeding given the current lack of ability to address discrimination — both subtle and overt — within its operations. Educational programs should be at the foundation of this mandate, to counter the lack of understanding of the GTHL's current participants at all levels and to modify behaviour. To ensure continued success and relevance, the GTHL needs to develop a strong, intentional EDI mandate to support change and create a culture of respect. This is in keeping with EDI initiatives that are currently occurring in business, social and political spheres across Canada.

The following highlights the Committee's findings through their analysis. The Committee looked at: townhall footage, surveys of stakeholders, focus groups, qualitative interviews, and an internal review of the GTHL's governance, most notably, their Board of Directors, alongside qualitative interviews with club representatives, to get an 'on the ground' perspective of operations, as well as a thorough By-law Review. The following pages provided a summary of the findings:

#### A. Townhall — Stories of discrimination

*"To be clear, racism is not just a Black or Brown or Indigenous person's problem. It's everyone's problem because it erodes the fabric of our society. And so, each one of us at every level has to use our platforms, our power, our privilege, and our resources to help create the kind of change that we want to see. We have to do better, and we will do better as a sport."*

*Townhall participant*

In September 2020, the co-chairs of the Committee held a Town Hall with parents, team officials, athletes and those involved in EDI initiatives in sports, to gain an understanding of the principal inclusion issues within the GTHL and hockey at large. People of influence participated, including Kim Davis — Executive Vice President, Social Impact, Growth Initiatives & Legislative Affairs of the NHL — Bernice Carnegie, and other NHL alumni. The Committee thanked all those who participated in the Town Hall for their insights and contributions.

Throughout the evening, participants shared stories of discrimination against their children, with the common theme being that little action was taken by disciplinary committees or team officials. Parents identified that action must be taken now, to

ensure other children do not face the same verbal, emotional and sometimes physical harassment that their children have faced. Black players specifically, reported being called slurs by fellow players. In many instances, it was reported that team officials and referees did not take action to discipline the offenders as they did not personally witness the incidents. As it stands, the rulebook requires referees and on-ice officials to personally hear or see the exact action to call a penalty, despite any witness involvement.

Discrimination is not always overt. BIPOC parents expressed that they faced the same problems growing up in hockey, as their children and grandchildren face today.

*[Referring to an incident where his son was wrongly suspended] "I wasn't aware of this until after and I couldn't understand how, as a top triple A team, the coach would have put my son in that position. I tried to address it, unfortunately, with the organization with the GTHL, OHF, and ended up going to the Human Rights Commission as well — it was never really addressed."*

*Townhall participant*

During the Town Hall, there was a strong emphasis on increasing education and discipline for players who verbally abuse others. Some participants believed that if players had a general understanding of racism and discrimination, that many of these problems would dissipate. Parents expressed a desire for all players to learn about the consequences of these actions, and for consequences to be enforced throughout the GTHL.

Many participants also said it was important to begin education at the grassroots level, while implementing systemic trickle-down change within the organization. The GTHL is a large organization with many clubs and sub-organizations. Participants said approaching this subject matter from both an organizational and individual level can help address discrimination within the GTHL.

*"Black people cannot do this alone. Asian people cannot do this alone. Jewish people cannot do this alone. We need everybody's help, to want to make the sport of hockey a wonderful experience for our young people, and for the parents and for everybody that's involved."*

*Townhall participant*

It was recommended that the Committee draw from GTHL alumni; former team officials and parents with diverse backgrounds, to learn from their experiences enduring racism in hockey, and apply them within the GTHL. The Committee has implemented this throughout its work and research, by applying strategies from the

Town Hall, distributing a survey across the GTHL, and conducting interviews with parents and alumni who expressed concern with systemic racism in the GTHL.

Overall, the Town Hall was a successful and essential community approach to gain support and advice for implementing equity practices in the GTHL. The session helped the Committee co-chairs form the Committee, and served as a reference throughout the Committee's work, for both its interim and final reports.

## B. Governance Model

Systemic change must be addressed at all levels, and thus it was essential for the Committee to have a thorough understanding of the GTHL's current operation and governance model. The GTHL must lead by example, and thus a thorough analysis of the organization's current governance model was conducted to comprehend the organization's past, current state, and projected future, to guide the Committee's recommendations. The following are what the Committee identified as the key elements of the GTHL's existing governance model.

### **Composition**

At the time of the creation of the Committee, the GTHL Board comprised seventeen directors, fourteen of which were elected and three of which were ex-officio and was composed of sixteen white men and one white woman. There were no BIPOC individuals sitting on the Board of Directors as of 2020. Through its governance chapter and interim report, the Committee recommended the implementation of a 30% BIPOC Board, and an increased number of women serving at the executive level. The GTHL moved to make these changes in 2021, and the Board now comprises three BIPOC Members, of its fourteen total elected Members. There are also two women serving on the Board, with one in a significant leadership position. It is the hope that with these changes, these individuals, including Prema Thiele, Cyril Bollers, Darren Lowe, and Kathie Wood will make significant contributions to the Board with their unique experiences, skills, and insights. The Committee hopes the Board will continue to expand its roster to include more BIPOC individuals, women, and those in minority groups during the coming years.

### **Electoral process**

The elections for the various positions are held during the organization's Annual General Meeting (AGM). The GTHL has a nomination process that is designed to identify candidates for various Board positions. Nominations are typically required to be provided in May of the current year, with the AGM to follow within a month or two of the nominations being submitted.

### **Power of the Board**

In its existing structure, the Board holds a lot of power. In certain circumstances, it can make changes without ratification from the Members, create a wide range of

rules and policies, hold the Members accountable through meaningful enforcement, and (through a majority vote of the Members) make significant changes to the GTHL that can impact the community it serves.

### **Respective roles**

This organization is governed by its organizational By-laws - a significant number of rules and obligations under the authority of Hockey Canada and the Ontario Hockey Federation. Under the GTHL's organizational By-laws, there is one President and three Vice Presidents. The Board includes four ex-officio Members made up of the Immediate Past President (currently vacant), the Secretary/Treasurer of the organization, and the respective Presidents of the Mississauga Hockey League ("M.H.L.") and the North York Hockey League ("N.Y.H.L.").

In the GTHL's current operating model there are several committees, each tasked to conduct specific work on behalf of the organization. These committees are chaired or co-chaired by a GTHL Board Member with committee Members drawn from the larger hockey community as volunteers.

### **Length of term**

The elected Board members currently sit for a term of two years. The President and First Vice President are elected in odd years, and the Second and Third Vice Presidents are elected in even years.

To become President, an individual must have been a director for at least three of the previous four years, one of which must have been as a Vice-President, or the individual must have been a director for at least four of the previous five years. To become a Vice-President, an individual must have been a director for at least two of the previous three years.

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## **Interviews with Member Representatives**

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To dive deeper, the Committee found it imperative to understand how the current governance model is seen from the perspective of Member representatives. Several representatives were interviewed to achieve this objective. These interviews were conducted in March 2021, at which point no BIPOC individuals had been elected to the Board. Three main themes arose:

- The GTHL's club representatives scored the GTHL Board of Directors in respect to diversity as needing improvement.
- The GTHL's club representatives believe it is *important* to bring about diverse voices to positions of governance.
- The GTHL's club representatives believe it is *necessary* for the league to bring diverse voices to positions of governance.

These findings, relating to the GTHL Board, demonstrated that there was a problem with the lack of diverse representation in the organization's governance, and indicated that representatives understood the importance and need for change. These findings were also a positive indication that Club Representatives would be willing to implement EDI initiatives and be partners in creating a more inclusive hockey culture in Toronto.

It should be noted, however, that although representatives recognized the importance and necessity of bringing diverse voices and representation to governance positions, their messaging was clear: they needed more support from the GTHL to introduce, initiate and integrate EDI initiatives.

There was a perception that the Board, at times, could be disconnected from its stakeholders. To resolve this, the Committee suggested that the Board strengthen its leadership with clear and robust direction through consistent communication. To combat the feeling of disconnect, subcommittees or structures dedicated to EDI could be created to foster a more effective relationship with the community. In addition, said subcommittees would benefit from a qualified staff member committed and versed in EDI that can help the community. Clear, concise, and consistent communication was paramount for the Board to provide concrete leadership and drive effective change.

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### **Characteristics of an Effective Board**

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It is important to expand upon and define best practices of effective Boards, to help support the Committee's recommendations. Overall, the Board of Directors is responsible for the governance of the organization. Collectively, each Board member should be working to ensure success in all its affairs, while attending to the needs and interests of all its stakeholders, across all levels of participation. While there are numerous factors that should be considered in the selection of a director, the key characteristics of effective Boards include not only the size of the Board, independence, and competency, but also the make-up and composition of the Board, including diversity. Research consistently shows that diverse Boards perform better. Research consistently shows that change must start at the top, in this case with the Board. According to findings in the Advancing Gender Equity in Sport report,

*"[the] Board must be a balanced leadership team sending a strong top-down signal to the rest of the organization. Improving equity and diversity at the leadership level supports diversity in Member participation, leading to increased participation, better organizational performance, and access to more diversified streams of funding by advancing diversity and inclusion in the organization."*

Specifically, sport organizations that strive toward a diverse and inclusive organization and leadership team benefit from the following:

- Teams with diverse leadership are more likely to report higher performance by 17%, higher quality decision making by 20%, and increased collaborative behaviour by 29%
- Diversity and inclusion lead to better innovation, creativity and problem solving
- Diversity and inclusion facilitate access to a larger talent pool
- Diversity and inclusion help organizations avoid reputational risks to their brand

The following are key characteristics of effective Boards, which have guided the recommendations found in Chapter 5 of this report:

### **Diversity**

A diverse Board of Directors is widely associated with a better performing Board. A diverse Board provides a greater scope of decision-making perspectives, protecting against groupthink, and resulting in increased independence and a reduction in consequential costs. Implementing EDI at a high level mitigates risk. Without intentionally considering EDI, organizations can fall into the traps of groupthink and lack of growth. A Board consisting of directors who vary in gender, orientation, race, and ability, will raise questions, and encourage discussions on matters a homogeneous Board will overlook.

A diverse Board offers new skills, a broader base of experience and knowledge, and establishes heterogeneity representing all the individuals on the team. By incorporating minorities on a Board, the needs, and interests of key stakeholders (*i.e.*, athletes and parents) are more equally represented and protected, demonstrating objective and critical judgments in the decision-making process. Collectively, the benefits of a diverse Board results in responsive policies and more democratic decisions. In sport organizations, diverse Boards foster positive relationships between group diversity and group outcomes. This is true at the GTHL Board level, and at the club level.

### **Size of the Board**

It is not uncommon for not-for-profit organizations to have a large Board size, due to the overreliance on volunteers as directors, and large workload. Various empirical studies have explored the relationship between an organization's performance and the size of the Board. Generally, a larger Board may be required for an organization with complex matters, whereby it may depend upon greater resources and advice. Smaller Boards are, however, more commonly recommended for most organizations.

### **Independence**

Effective Boards have been found to have a high degree of independence in their members. An independent director is someone without any relation or bias to the business of the organization. Specifically, organizations whose Boards are



comprised of a large majority of independent individuals have been found to perform better. This is because they can be more objective and offer different perspectives, with a smaller threat of bias. This ensures the needs of all stakeholders are served and protected. A Board weak in independence risks serving the needs of only a few stakeholders, engaging in biased and ineffective decision making, and having limited overall performance.

### **Competency**

The skills of each director are critical to the collective effectiveness of a Board. When electing new Members, the Board should take into consideration the skillsets that will best serve both the current and future needs of the organization and identify gaps in current Members' skills. Four areas of competencies to consider are: industry knowledge and experience, technical skills, governance competency, and behaviour competencies. While no one individual will embody all these attributes, a Board should strive to collectively have these attributes fulfilled. A Board that cannot properly monitor, guide, and deliver benefits to the organization's stakeholders will ultimately be ineffective.

### **Behaviours**

The action of each Board member is integral to the Board's effectiveness. Directors should be willing to challenge, question, probe, discuss, explore, and debate amongst themselves. In fact, a culture of open dissent is considered one of the most important behaviours a Board can have. Dissent challenges assumptions and beliefs. It helps to ensure that groupthink is avoided while offering various viewpoints and a thorough analysis of pertinent issues.

### **Performance Evaluation and Accountability**

Board members should engage in regular performance evaluation. Performance reviews provide feedback and help ensure the efficacy of an organization. Without it, it is difficult to establish accountability and an understanding of strengths and weaknesses. The most effective Boards improve through regular and intelligent performance evaluation. Performance evaluation may include self-assessment performed by each director, peer review, or a full Board evaluation. A sample assessment tool for Board members can be found in the [appendix of this report](#).

### **Term Limits**

Experienced Board members can offer an organization some advantage with their institutional memory. However, there is a tipping point, as studies show that Board members who serve for more than ten years tend to impair the performance of the organization. Member organizations are, therefore, strongly encouraged to consider term limits, and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of retaining long-term Board Members.

Advantages of term limits include a greater connection with the community, more opportunities for innovation, more accountability and distribution of power, and



better group dynamics. Further, imposing term limits minimizes social loafing, loss of commitment and diligence, and stagnation within the organization. To facilitate this process, elections should be staggered, so that no more than one-third of the Board is absent at a time.

As the Committee thoroughly examined the GTHL Board in its current state, and presented best practices for Boards, the following section highlights the relevant Rules and By-laws that can help lessen the gap between reality and best practices for the GTHL and its Members.

It is important to note that the Committee believes that changes at the Member level will have a significant impact, as this will truly change the 'face of hockey'.

### C. GTHL Rules & By-law Review

Organizations rely upon Rules and By-laws to assist and direct them in their daily organizational functions. The GTHL has implemented a detailed set of rules and organizational By-laws that govern its actions and that of its constituents. The Committee examined both in detail as they apply to the issues of EDI, Board governance, and the intersection of these issues.

The Committee considered the Mission Statement of the GTHL as an overarching philosophy that directs and informs the organization. The Committee then examined the relevant, specific clauses of the Rules and By-laws that provide authority and jurisdiction to the Board of Directors, analyzing any areas where there may be opportunity for change and improvement.

The Committee i) identified where the rules and By-laws can be utilized; ii) identified where and how those rules can be changed and/or modified; and iii) established why it is important to make these modifications to the current Rules and By-laws of the organization.

The following considerations are vital to the organization's work as it moves forward:

- How the Board is elected
- The positions that are occupied — specifically positions of influence within the Board structure
- The length of terms that are in place and how they impact the capacity for growth and inclusion
- The composition of the Board to determine how greater diversity could be achieved

For ease of reference, the relevant sections for the organization to consider with a view of making better use of, are highlighted in the "Relevant Sections".

**Table 1***Rule Book — Relevant Sections*

<b>Section</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Original language</b>
1.1	Mission statement	The purpose of the League is:
1.1 (a)		- to promote and govern organized minor hockey for youths within the territory under its jurisdiction;
1.1 (b)		- to operate a competitive minor hockey league for youths at the AAA, AA, and A categories within the territory under its jurisdiction;
1.1 (c)		- to foster the development of hockey skills and knowledge of those players, team officials and managers who participate in the League;
1.1 (d)		- to foster the development of good character, citizenship, and sportsmanship through participation in minor hockey;
3.8	Powers of the Board to change rules and policies	<b>Power to amend rules</b> — The Board is authorized to amend these Rules from time to time as is necessary to be consistent with and comply with the constitution, By-laws, rules, regulations, or policies of Hockey Canada and/or the Ontario Hockey Federation. <b>Such amendments shall not require ratification by the Members.</b>
5.0	Member governance	<b>Governance: By-laws, Members and Club Policies.</b> Each Member must be properly incorporated, registered as a not for profit and provide the GTHL each year a copy of its By-laws, Officers, Members, and its annual return filings under the Corporations Act.
17.4	House League	<b>Philosophy Related to House League Select Programs.</b> The House League Select Program is a hockey program that is based in the House League and should be an extension of that program. Players and their families that choose to participate in a House League Select Program do so because it reflects the attitudes and community affiliation of the House League to which they belong and in which they participate.

17.9		<p><b>Operating Guidelines for House League Select Programs</b></p> <p><b>(a) Intent of House League Select Hockey.</b> Teams participating in House League Select Programs, while considered more competitive than House League teams, are an extension of the House League and are intended to reflect the same spirit of community-oriented recreational hockey. Therefore, they should seek to be inclusive and provide as much opportunity.</p>
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**Table 2**

*By-laws — Relevant Sections*

Section	Title	Original language
3.01	Membership	The Membership of the Corporation shall consist of the applicants for incorporation, and such individuals, corporations, and other entities as are admitted to Membership from time to time by a resolution of the Board.
3.02	Classes of Membership	<p>Membership in the Corporation shall consist of the following six classes of Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Ex-officio</li> <li>(b) Honorary</li> <li>(c) Club</li> <li>(d) Executive</li> <li>(e) Division</li> <li>(f) Affiliated Group</li> </ul>
4.05	Nominations	Except in the case of the election of the Affiliated Group Directors, any Member or any person who is connected or affiliated with a Club, Division or Affiliated Group Member, may nominate any other Member or any person who is or has been connected or affiliated with a Club, Division or Affiliated Group Member or any other person, other than a Member excluded under the By-laws, for election to the Board.
5.02	Number of directors	Until changed in accordance with the Act, the number of directors of the Corporation shall be eighteen (18) of whom nine (9) shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

5.03	Qualification of Directors	
5.03 (1)		<p>(1) In order to qualify to become or act as a Director of the Corporation, an individual must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be or have been connected to or affiliated with a Club, Division or Affiliated Group;</li> <li>b) be a citizen or permanent resident of Canada;</li> <li>c) be at least eighteen (18) years of age;</li> <li>d) not be a paid employee of the GTHL or of any Member;</li> <li>e) not be an immediate family Member of anyone connected to or affiliated with a Member;</li> <li>f) not be an undischarged bankrupt;</li> <li>g) have the capacity under law to contract;</li> <li>h) not have been declared incapable by a court in Canada or in another country;</li> <li>i) not have been convicted of a criminal offence involving moral turpitude.</li> </ul> <p>No Director of the Corporation, nor any Member of his immediate family, may fulfil any duty with any Club, Division or Affiliated Group.</p>
5.03 (2)		<p>(2) In addition to the requirements set out in sub-paragraph 1 hereof, in order to qualify to become <b>President</b> of the Corporation, an individual must have been a Director of the Corporation for at least three (3) of the previous four (4) years, one of which must have been as a Vice-President, or have been a Director of the Corporation for a period of at least four (4) of the previous five (5) years.</p>
5.03 (3)		<p>(3) In addition to the requirements set out in sub-paragraph 1 hereof, in order to qualify to become a <b>Vice-President</b> of the Corporation, an individual must have been a Director of the Corporation for at least two (2) of the previous three (3) years.</p>
5.04	Restrictions	<p>With the exception of the Ex-officio Directors representing the M.H.L. and the N.Y.H.L, all Directors, within thirty (30) days of being elected or appointed, shall divest themselves of any</p>

		active executive position within a Club, Division or Affiliated Group including, without limitation, a position on the board of directors of that Member, or any executive position with a team belonging to that Member. Any person seeking election or appointment as a Director or Officer shall declare any conflict of interest in advance of seeking election or appointment, in accordance with the Corporation's Conflict of Interest Policy.
5.05	Election and Terms of Office	
5.05 (a)		(a) <b>Fourteen directors shall be elected by the Members</b> of the Corporation at the Annual Meeting and shall retire in rotation as set out below. Of the fourteen elected directors, <b>twelve shall be elected by all of the Members of the Corporation and the two Affiliate Group Directors shall be elected exclusively by the Affiliated Group Members</b> in accordance with subsections 5.05 (i) and (j) below.
5.05 (b)		(b) At each Annual Meeting of Members held in <b>odd numbered years, a separate ballot</b> will first be held for the election of the <b>President and First Vice-President</b> and at each Annual Meeting of Members held in <b>even numbered years a separate</b> ballot will first be held for the election of the <b>Second Vice-President and the Third Vice-President</b> , such election to be by acclamation in the case of any office for which there is only one nominee. In order to be elected, a candidate <b>must receive at least 50% plus one of the votes cast</b> . Any candidate who is unsuccessful in the election for any one of these offices may stand for election as director if identified upon their nomination.
5.05 (e)		(e) At each Annual Meeting of Members an election for four directors will be held. Elected directors shall serve a two-year term unless otherwise specified in this By-law.
5.05 (i)		(i) At each Annual Meeting, the <b>Affiliated Group Directors' Election</b> shall be held. Only Affiliated Group Members may participate in the Affiliated Group Directors' Election. Affiliated Group Directors shall each serve a <b>two-year term</b> unless otherwise specified in this By-law.

5.06	Ex-officio directors	In addition to the fourteen elected directors, there shall be not more than four ex-officio Directors. The following shall be ex-officio Directors of the Corporation:
5.06 (a)		(a) the person appointed to the office of Immediate Past President of the Corporation from time to time;
5.06 (b)		(b) the person appointed to the office of Secretary/Treasurer of the Corporation from time to time; and
5.06 (c)		(c) the respective Presidents of the M.H.L. and N.Y.H.L.
6.02	Other Committees	The Board may from time to time appoint such other committees and committee chairmen, as it may deem advisable with such powers and duties as it may determine. Such committees may include Board Members and representatives of Member organizations or other qualified persons.

The Committee strongly encourages that the above sections be looked at closely in concert with the recommendations that are made to effect change. The Committee notes that the Directors of the GTHL have the authority to change both the rules as well as the By-laws further to section 12.01 thereof:

**12.01** The By-laws of the Corporation may be passed, repealed, amended, or re-enacted by By-law enacted by a majority of the directors at a meeting of the Board and confirmed by a majority of the Members at a meeting duly called for the purpose of considering the said By-law, within 60 days of such meeting of the Board.

These changes have been expanded upon within the Appendix and can be found under ["Section B — Draft Proposal for change"](#). Please see the Appendix at the end of this report for further detail and direction regarding all drafted proposals for change.

#### D. Survey — Differences in perception

GTHL athletes, team officials, parents, referees, and alumni (within the last 5 years) associated with the GTHL were contacted and asked to participate in a survey, which was conducted over a three-week period. Two thousand and sixty-two participants completed the survey assessing the GTHL's EDI protocols and practices with the aim of making hockey a safe and welcoming place for everyone. Results were analyzed,

both collectively and within group analysis. The survey drew on the research and skills of individuals at X University to generate the conclusions below.

Participants represented mostly AA, A, and AAA levels, followed by 'select' and 'house league'. Almost 25% of the participants identified as a visible minority; however, most did not identify as belonging to a visible minority, persons with disabilities, Indigenous, or 2SLGBTQIA+. In addition, while about 2% identified as a person with disabilities, less than 1% identified as Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, or belonged to multiple of these groups.

Across all results, people who do not identify as BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ or disabled do not identify inequities within the GTHL, in comparison to those who are BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+ or disabled. As discussed previously, given that the GTHL is not proportionally representative of the community it serves (e.g., the percentage of diversity in the GTHL population, is not representative to the percentage of diversity within the GTA), this creates an inherent inability to see discrimination within the league that will perpetuate an overt and, in some cases, subversive inequity leading to negative experiences.

**Key insights:** The following are key insights generated and summarized from the quantitative data attributed to the survey, with specific charts and figures to follow. The Committee has also included a series of figures and charts to provide the reader with some indication as to the highlights flowing from the report.

- In line with the GTHL mission to operate a competitive minor hockey league for youths at the AAA, AA, and A categories within the territory under its jurisdiction, the survey captured responses from parents of current athletes in the GTHL. Majority of respondents were men and did not identify as belonging to any of the listed equity-seeking groups
- About a third perceived racial action and discrimination was prevalent in the GTHL, however only a relatively small proportion of parents/athletes as well as team officials reported direct experiences such as being called racially insulting names.
- More parents and athletes perceived they were sometimes unfairly treated or received fewer opportunities than others and this was more likely to be felt by equity seeking groups than non-equity seeking groups and men in the sample.
- Non-minorities perceive less experience with threats.
- It is perceived that the GTHL is fulfilling its mission promoting and governing organized minor hockey for youths and participants recognized its role in governing hockey rules and regulations, community engagement, training, education and investing and growing the game in the GTA. However, their efforts at promoting a culture of acceptance and inclusivity and investments in house leagues were ranked poorly.

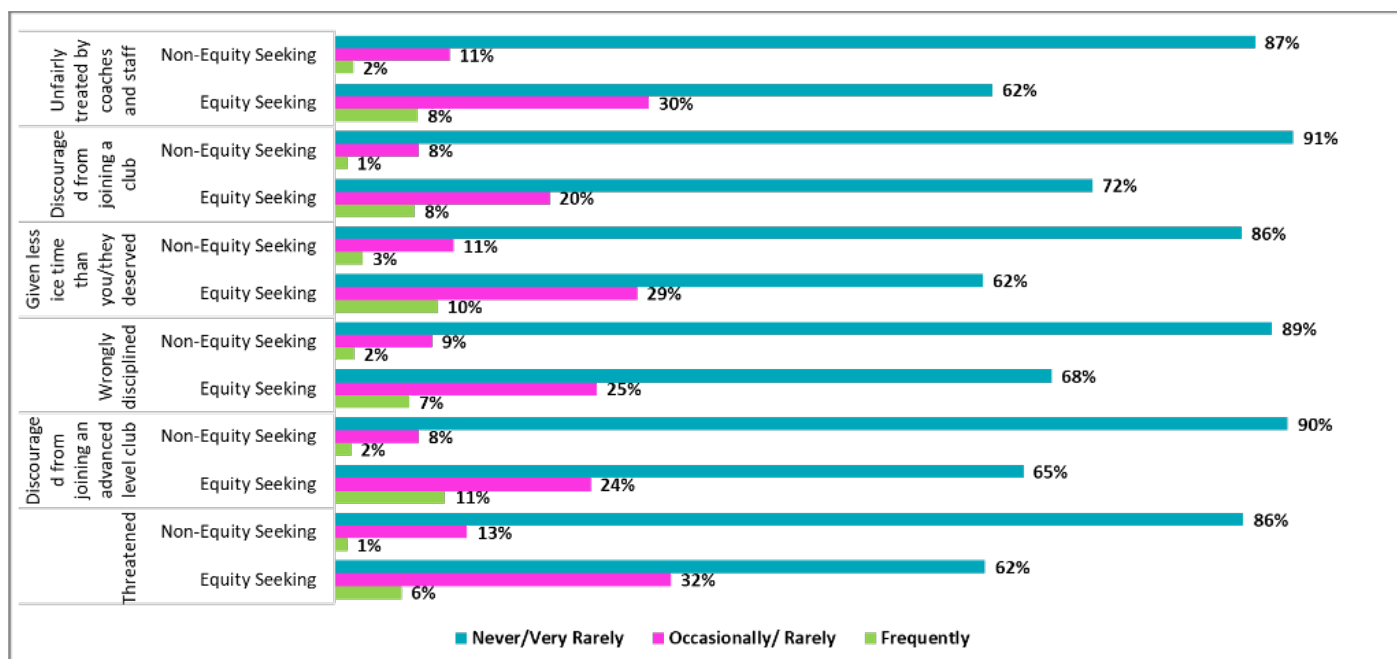
- All GTHL participants are aware of and have access to the current policies and the rulebook for the most part. However, there is less equality in the complaint procedure with more members of the equity-seeking groups feeling it is not easy to submit a complaint against the league or that the current policies are not a deterrent to racist/discriminatory behavior on the ice or in the long term.
- The perception of the effectiveness of the complaint procedure, whether it is resolved quickly and has impact on short- and long-term outcomes is different for the parents and athletes, equity-seeking groups, and women. As such, the potential to submit a complaint can be impacted by gender, visible minority status, and one's role in the GTHL. Regardless of this division, it was perceived that people contemplating a complaint should make one and in fact, more members of the equity-seeking groups said they have filed complaints.
- The GTHL, in general, was perceived to create a welcoming culture and people are treated the same regardless of their race or ethnicity. Majority also feels that the league takes issues of racism and discrimination seriously and has effective EDI education and training programs in place.
- Overall, most participants are of the non-minority group, and have not perceived overt threatening behaviour, and do not feel excluded, or been unfairly treated by team officials and staff, or discouraged from advancing their careers or joining an advanced level club. However, this is not representative of the equity-seeking groups' perception.
- As indicated in the open-ended responses, people expressed that sexism was not adequately explored in the survey. Based on comments made, there appears to be a perceived difference in how welcoming the league is with respect to females, the management of discipline, and how much time is given on the ice as it relates to females.
- Based on the open responses, there also appears to be issues facing 2SLGBTQIA+ and disabled stakeholders, which are not captured in the data due to the low representation of these equity-seeking groups.

To assist the reader, the Committee has included various figures for context to the aforementioned findings, while driving to the Committee's recommendations. [Please see the Appendix for additional figures.](#)

## **Figure 14**

*Threats, discouragement, or unfair treatment by equity-seeking group status*

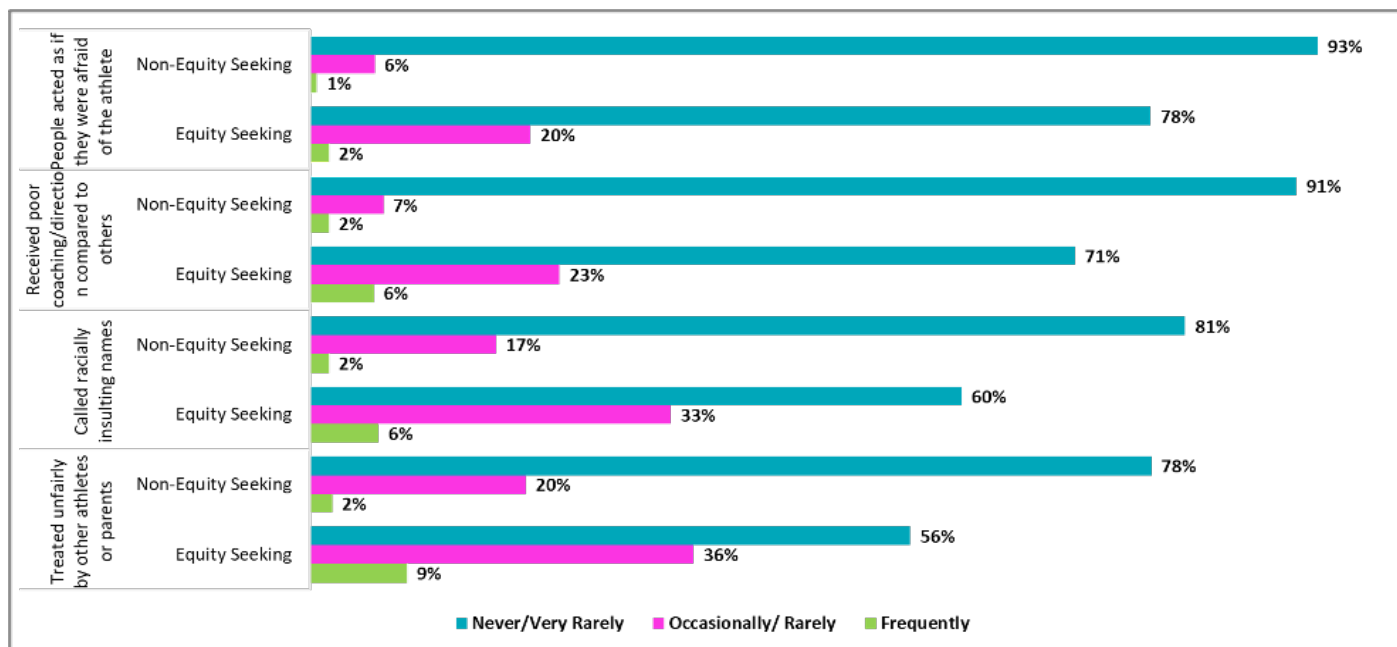




*Note.* In Figure 14, above, overall, most reported that these behaviours occur very rarely or never. However, the proportion of participants belonging to equity-seeking groups that reported these behaviours occurring frequently was twice or more than the proportion of non-equity-seeking participants that reported the same. For example, about 10% of the equity-seeking group said they are frequently discouraged from joining an advanced level club, given less time on the ice, discouraged from joining a club, and unfairly treated by team officials and staff compared to the proportions of the non-equity-seeking group who said the same (less than 3%).

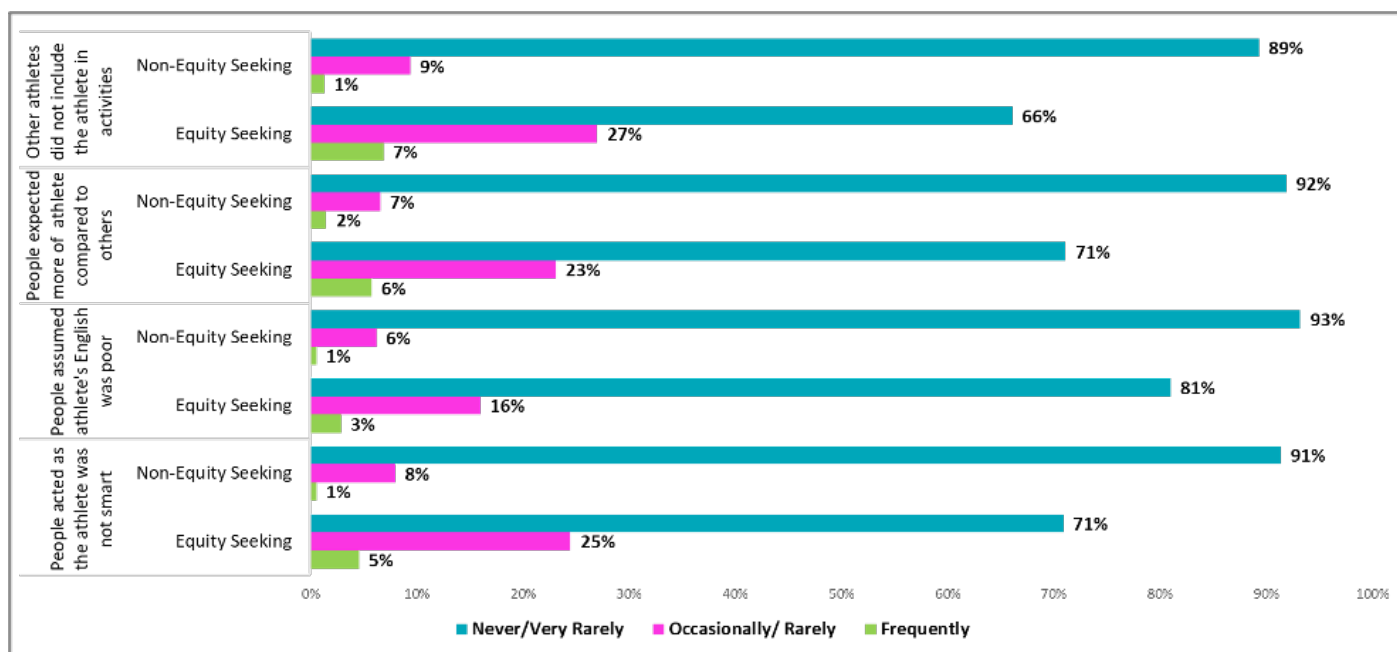
## Figure 15

*Inclusion and opportunities in the GTHL by equity-seeking status*



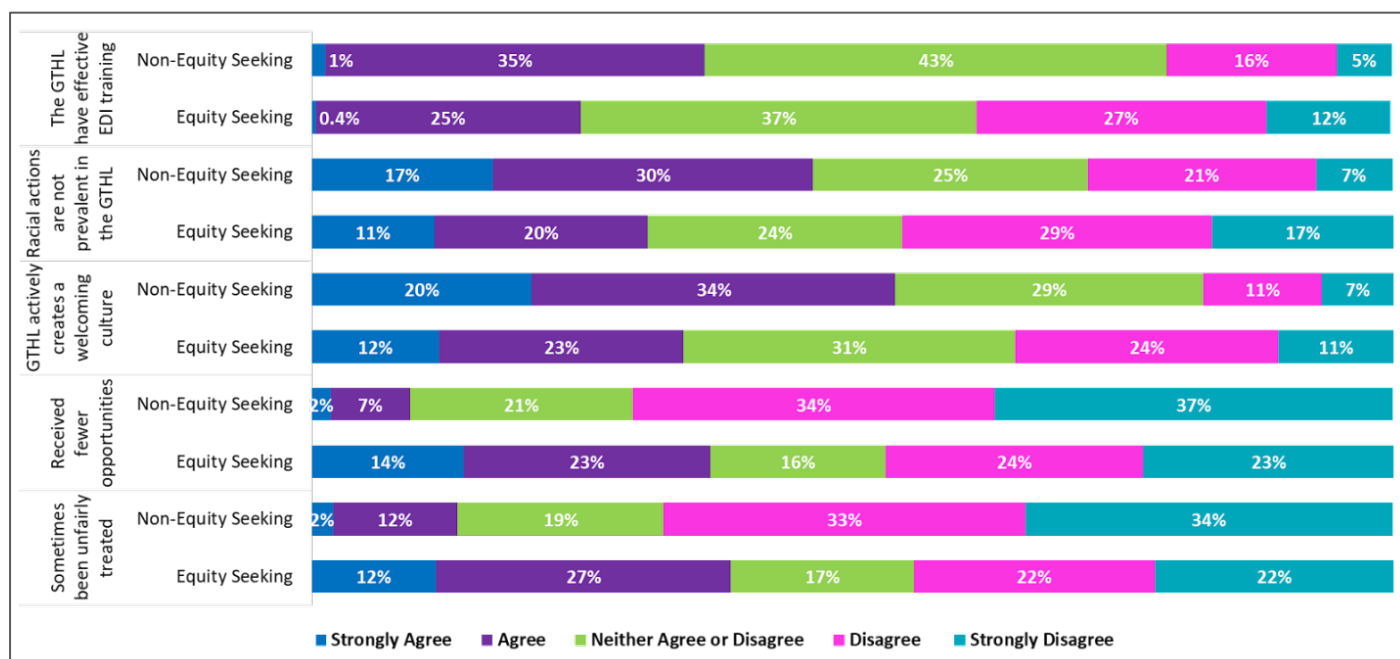
**Figure 16**

*Assumptions and expectations in the GTHL by equity-seeking status*



**Figure 17**

*Opportunities, culture, and EDI training in the GTHL*



*Note.* As shown in Figure 17, more respondents in the equity-seeking group strongly agreed/agreed that they have sometimes been treated unfairly and received fewer opportunities than others. In contrast, a higher proportion of the non-equity-seeking group agreed/strongly agreed that the GTHL creates a welcoming culture with effective EDI training programs.

## E. Interviews with Key League Stakeholders

In addition to the Committee's quantitative survey that was released in summer of 2021, the Committee conducted a series of interviews in late 2021 to gather further insights into the GTHL's handling of racism and discrimination. The participants who were interviewed had a range of experience with the GTHL, from newcomers to individuals who had been involved with the league for decades. A range of roles were represented, as the Committee wanted to hear from a swath of experiences and vantage points. Five major themes emerged from the interviews. They are as follows, and in no particular order of reference or importance:

### Lack of EDI recall and the need for more education

Individuals interviewed struggled to identify or recall any specific education provided by the GTHL that dealt solely with the issues of racism and discrimination. Interview participants expressed that there was a lack of clarity regarding education. There was a conflicting understanding of what was mandated, or even offered by the GTHL. Moreover, the majority of people within the interviews identified education as one of the largest opportunities for the GTHL to start making effective change in regard to

combating discrimination and improving the culture of the GTHL. When asked about education, most answers supported a need for further education specific to EDI.

Suggestions that arose from the interviews regarding how the GTHL could improve its approach to education were wide ranging and pragmatic. The first was to make educational components more tailored to the audience receiving them. One suggestion was to have more experienced individuals (i.e., those with an educational background or lived experience relating to the topic) leading education sessions (and/or using individuals that the athletes look up to, like notable alumni that have gone on to play or coach at the professional levels). Interviewees also advocated for age-specific education, and to accommodate athletes based upon their level of psychological development. Secondly, the interview participants suggest that education needs to go above and beyond just being directed solely at certain stakeholders— the GTHL’s approach must be more holistic involving parents, players, team officials, and the GTHL Board and Staff. By doing so, EDI awareness would impact all GTHL stakeholders, and help create accountability throughout the league by systemically outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Individuals need to have the skillset to understand and recognize when they or someone around them are being exclusionary and discriminatory. Interview participants felt that further education is necessary to equip people with the knowledge to identify racism and discrimination whether overt or subtle.

Interview participants expressed that this skillset is lacking within the GTHL and that an inability to recognize discrimination (or to confront it) is present. Interviewees expressed a desire for education to teach individuals that when they exclude or are discriminatory — even when not intended — they are taking away that individual’s opportunity to reach their full potential within the sport.

Several interview participants also expanded upon the current approach of penalizing individuals for discrimination, stating that they believe simply suspending an individual for their conduct is not necessarily the fastest way to change behaviour. Consequences that incorporate an educational component serves a dual purpose: it addresses the offending behaviour and presents an opportunity for the individual to learn why their conduct was inappropriate.

### **Culture in the GTHL**

Interview participants were generally satisfied with the GTHL and found the involvement of their child to be positive, on average. However, one recurring concern that arose was that there is a culture in the GTHL – perpetuated by coaches, players, and parents – focused on winning and results, as opposed to the overall development of the player and the person. Parents who were interviewed expressed concern that although sport can teach valuable life lessons, there is currently too much emphasis on the scoreboard (and creating hockey players), instead of creating fine, upstanding human beings who play hockey. This is not to say that individuals were dismissive of winning or striving for goals, but rather, that the GTHL is missing an opportunity to invest in athletes as well-rounded human beings, and not just hockey players.

It should be noted that when the Committee asked about the culture of the GTHL, interview participants all had fragmented understandings and definitions of the GTHL's culture. There was no clear consensus that GTHL stakeholders understood or could expand upon the GTHL's culture. The GTHL leadership has an opportunity to define culture on their own terms by leading by example and setting a tone from the top down. This, however, should not be the only approach. The culture of the GTHL is not the sole responsibility of the Board, it is a responsibility that must be shared by the Club and Organization Members, which would also include a bottom-up approach.

### **Financial barriers to playing hockey in the GTHL**

Another theme that continuously came up in stakeholder interviews surrounded financial barriers to playing hockey. The Committee looked at the perceived and actual high cost of hockey and how it impacts the GTHL. Interview participants concluded that the cost was a deterrent to the inclusivity of the GTHL because of the socioeconomic barriers of hockey that disproportionately affect underrepresented, diverse communities.

Several interview participants expressed a need for change regarding the reality of financial exclusion. To change this, interview participants presented several solutions. These included having the GTHL play a greater role in community outreach, raising awareness of bursary opportunities, and promoting programs which help families who need assistance for the additional costs of competitive hockey.

### **Power imbalance**

Interview participants often expressed the power imbalance between team officials and teams, with parents saying that they had experienced or witnessed incidents where the coach had abused their power. The idea of being a 'parent cut' and the fear around speaking up and/or disagreeing with the coach also arose as a topic of concern and conversation.

The notion that team officials hold a significant amount of power over stakeholders — and that at times that power is abused — is concerning. Notwithstanding the fact that a screening policy exists, the interview participants expressed a need for more screening requirements for those seeking coach-level positions. This screening process should be in addition to status-quo background checks and go beyond what is currently in place for the screening process. The interview participants also expressed a desire to see a robust screening process applied across the board at all levels of the GTHL. Those in positions of power must be held accountable to the same extent that athletes are.

### **Lack of awareness of league operation and makeup of the organization**

The interview participants were questioned about their knowledge of the GTHL's Board and most of them were unaware of the Board, its composition, functionality,

or how it was formed. There was a sense of disconnect with the GTHL Board. Though interview participants were unaware of the current composition of the Board, they ultimately concluded that they would like it to be more diverse because they recognized the value of diversity at an executive level.

## **Summary**

The stakeholder interviews produced several themes. In general, people are content with their experience within the GTHL, however, there is room to improve the experience for everyone. A general lack of understanding or ability to recognize discriminatory actions was noted, and further education is needed at all levels.

The five themes that emerged during the interviews centered on: lack of EDI education, recall and the need for more education, the GTHL's culture, financial barriers of playing hockey in the GTHL, power imbalances with team officials, and a lack of awareness of league operation and makeup of the organization.

Participants further provided suggestions for improving the landscape in each of these five areas. Suggested solutions centered on improving and expanding education and training in relation to EDI at all levels of the GTHL, including adding additional training in relation to unconscious bias, sensitivity, and anti-harassment. This training may help empower and educate stakeholders within the GTHL that struggle to recognize discriminatory behaviour or the damaging effects of it.

Additionally, it was expressed that the GTHL should actively seek out opportunities to engage historically underserved communities in relation to the game of hockey, while working towards lessening the cost of hockey, and providing additional support to families that may need financial aid. Further, providing subsidized training for competitive levels (i.e., power skating or skills sessions) may help keep costs down and lower the accepted rates of additional training. Additionally, interview participants expressed a need for further screening measures for individuals that would like to take up coaching, or coach-like positions. Further, a lack of understanding and/or knowledge of the GTHL's Board of Directors and governance model highlights an opportunity for the GTHL to unite its stakeholders.

Interview participants shared the opinion that the GTHL is a world-leading hockey league and therefore needs to take further steps to reflect the world around them. Intentional steps should be taken to ensure that this cultural change happens through consistent and conscious decision making.

## **F. Focus Groups on Sexism and Gender-Based Discrimination**

In addition to the Committee's quantitative survey that was released in the summer of 2021, the Committee conducted subsequent focus groups with an emphasis on

sexism and gender-based discrimination. Four major themes emerged from the focus groups:

### **Lack of accountability regarding gendered language**

Throughout the focus groups, several participants described incidents in which people in positions of power (team officials, parents, etc.) were either not held accountable for using sexist language or did not hold others accountable for using discriminatory language. The degrees of offence were wide ranging from non-overt, to incidents in which players and parents had slighted others by describing them as feminine in a derogatory manner (i.e., “you play/hit like a girl”), to more pointed slurs linked to female anatomy. Focus group participants also noted that sex and gender-based discrimination frequently is rationalized and/or chalked up to being “chirping” and part of the game. Focus group participants noted that the ‘bystander effect’ exists within the GTHL and suggested that the GTHL should make strides to create a culture of reporting discriminatory behaviour by empowering people to speak up without fear of repercussion. Focus group participants expressed that team officials and parents are modelling behaviour for athletes, and those individuals should be held to the same standard as players to truly make a shift in the culture and norms of the GTHL.

### **Culture of silence/ Fear of complaining**

Related to the lack of accountability, frustrations with power imbalances between team officials and athletes frequently arose during focus group discussions. In general, there was a culture of mistrust and fear related to reporting behaviour from team officials and people in positions of power. The idea of being a ‘parent cut’ was also brought up as a genuine fear, meaning the athlete is cut from a team due to parental interference. Parents risked having this imposed on their child if they disagreed with a coach’s decision and/or team culture. There was also frustration and distrust with the lack of requirements to become a coach, with several parents providing anecdotes expressing frustration about behaviour being allowed in hockey, that would not be allowed in other environments like school. Participants witnessed problems within the league, but shared a fear of repercussion, and a distrust as to whether the perpetrator would be held accountable. There was an overall lack of faith in the league’s reporting system and its ability to hold perpetrators accountable.

### **A binary way of thinking**

Focus group participants expressed the need for the GTHL to ensure separate and dedicated physical spaces for women (i.e., designated locker rooms in all arenas), as well as space for individuals who do not identify with either gender. Also noted was a lack of intellectual space that is characterized by binary ways of thinking. This area was identified as an issue that was likely to be an evolving problem for years to come, and participants noted an opportunity for sensitivity training regarding the unique needs of women and non-binary individuals in the game of hockey.

### **Lack of opportunities for women in leadership positions**

It was stated by focus groups that a lack of female representation in the GTHL is perpetuating the GTHL’s issues with sexism, gender-based discrimination, and

disrespectful language and behaviour towards women and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Focus group participants shared that, currently, very few female team officials in the GTHL exist, and that the league has an opportunity to grow their female representation and pool of talent by recruiting qualified women to all leadership positions. Furthermore, increasing female representation would be a significant step in the right direction to combat gendered language and sexist norms within the league by empowering women. It was stated that diversity in thought is always a benefit to an organization, and the GTHL can further their diversity by empowering women to take up positions of power within the league.

## **Summary**

Although these focus groups provided examples and observations that sexism and gender-based discrimination within the GTHL is prevalent, it is not always overt, and can be complicated. The focus group participants shared a similar opinion that was arrived at with the stakeholder interviews. Specifically, that the GTHL is a world leading hockey league and, to reach its full potential, it must take steps through consistent and conscious decision making, to combat sex and gender-based discrimination.

The four themes that emerged during the focus groups centered on: a lack of accountability in the use of gendered language, a culture of silence and fear, a binary way of thinking, and a lack of opportunity for women in leadership positions.

Focus group participants further provided suggestions for improving the landscape in each of these four areas. Suggested solutions included improving and expanding education and training in relation to unconscious bias, sensitivity, and sexism and gender-based discrimination. Other suggestions include intentional work to create space, lessen barriers, and increase visibility of non-binary and female participants, while actively seeking out opportunities to recruit, train, and promote women and non-binary leaders at all levels. An increased presence of women and non-binary individuals will serve to add to the diversity of the GTHL, help erode sexism and gender-based discrimination, and provide role models to young athletes that may not typically see themselves reflected in leadership positions. Focus group participants expressed a need for the GTHL to foster a culture of reporting and accountability for sexism and gender-based discrimination to be eradicated. Of significant note was that children need to see themselves represented to feel as though they are welcome and valued, and that many opportunities exist for the GTHL to take positive steps towards a more gender-inclusive culture.

## **G. External Review: Online Searches, Consultation with Key Personnel**

In its external review, the Committee took a holistic approach to compare best practices in other organizations, differing approaches to EDI, and to examine struggles that other organizations may have encountered in similar ventures. The external analysis also considered what was being said in addition to the interviews and survey about the organization. Here, the Committee examined what was being said in the media about hockey culture and, the GTHL. This approach assisted the



Committee in arriving at the series of recommendations to further the advancement of the GTHL. The following is the Committee's findings for the external review:

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### **Media Reports: What's being said 'out there'**

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In the last number of years, there has been a growing concern about whether EDI was being taken seriously within the GTHL clubs and organizations, especially when it came to complaints. Some stated that the approach was tone deaf and not comprehensive enough. To add to these concerns, there were media reports that echoed this sentiment and framed the GTHL in a negative light.

There have been articles written about the GTHL pertaining to racism and discrimination within the league that attracted significant attention. Some of these articles highlight specific incidents and share experiences from both players and parents in the league. From this, starting in 2020, several of the league's policies came under scrutiny from which three main themes emerged:<sup>xviii</sup>

- Racism and discrimination exist within the GTHL
- Frustrations with the lack of transparency regarding racism and discrimination
- The need for change

It is important to note that while racism and discrimination is not exclusive to the GTHL, the articles paint a picture of a league that not only fails to reflect the diverse city in which it operates but also fails to address complaints regarding racism and discrimination.

The following is a summary of the main observations the Committee noted as to the themes from these articles, in relation to hockey and the GTHL. These observations do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Committee.

#### **Racism and Discrimination exist within the GTHL**

Some BIPOC GTHL players report that they are routinely targeted with verbal insults because of their race.<sup>xix</sup> In one case, an athlete reported to several news outlets that he had been subjected to racist comments in what was estimated as half of the games in the season.<sup>xx</sup> Of note, the athlete opted not to report this behaviour to the GTHL or any officials.

Frustration was expressed around the role of referees and officials in these incidents<sup>xxi</sup>. It was reported that if referees or officials do not hear the slur, no serious action is usually taken because the league cannot determine that a discriminatory slur had been uttered. If the referee and/or official does not hear the slur, there is no immediate penalty, but there may be an investigation which could lead to discipline.

Further observations in the articles suggested that complications arose when using low-paid game officials and volunteer parents to operate teams and games.<sup>xxii</sup> It was

expressed that the compensation given to officials and referees is negligible and dissuades people from taking on the extra duties of filing complaints and paperwork. The GTHL is therefore in a difficult position to recruit game officials for the compensation offered, which some say perpetuates the problem. In these reports, this reality has eroded faith in the officials and current system.

### **Frustrations with the lack of transparency regarding racism and discrimination**

It was also reported that the league has been dismissive in how they deal with discriminatory complaints and reporting, and that more transparency and accountability is needed at all levels.<sup>xxiii</sup> Articles expressed a general tone of mistrust with the governance and how the league handled complaints,<sup>xxiv</sup> and a tone of frustration emerged regarding how certain complaints were handled, painting a picture of a cumbersome operating system with outdated policies, practices, and protocols. Specific frustrations emerged on how records were maintained, and the issue was raised of whether families knew their rights prior to hearings concerning allegations of racism and discrimination.

### **Need for change**

A demand for more transparency in reporting discriminatory slurs within the league was a significant trend within the articles.<sup>xxv</sup> Notable GTHL alumni, including professional hockey players, have stated that the league's position is unacceptable in how they report discriminatory incidents.<sup>xxvi</sup> The reporting expressed the feeling that the league has been secretive and lacks transparency, ultimately perpetuating the problem of racism and discrimination within the GTHL.

It should be noted that the GTHL did respond to these media reports, by publicizing the alleged complaints. For a more fulsome understanding of their response, please turn to the [Appendix of this report](#).

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## **External Review - EDI beyond the GTHL**

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The GTHL is not alone when it comes to efforts to include diversity in its mission, education, and approach. Numerous corporations and sports organizations are working to build diversity and inclusion from grassroots through to the leadership level. The benefits of a commitment are clear: EDI is good for society, organizations, and the bottom line. Even with the challenges brought on with the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies are staying committed to maintaining their EDI mandates according to "Diversity wins: How inclusion matters" By McKinsey & Company, stating: "companies need to seize this moment—both to protect the gains they have already made and to leverage I&D [EDI] to position themselves to prosper in the future. There is ample

evidence that diverse and inclusive companies are more likely to make better, bolder decisions—a critical capability in the crisis.”

The EDI business case is stronger than ever. Companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians. Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.

At the same time, to demonstrate EDI, there is a recent commitment from sports and other organizations to change racist legacy names (I.e., the Washington Football Team, Cleveland Guardians, Edmonton Elks). In education, X University, named after an individual, associated with being a proponent of residential schools, will be re-named.

Importantly, these realities exist in the same world that stakeholders of the GTHL are living and working in, creating expectations that stakeholders will bring to all areas of their lives (i.e., youth hockey). Further, the youth in the GTHL will of course grow to lead and work in an environment where EDI plays a key role. Having the opportunity to learn the EDI foundations through sport in addition to many other positive values is an important and admirable pursuit.

Many public and private examples highlight the broad commitment to EDI. Sports organizations have an opportunity to grow funding and sponsorship by embedding equity into organizational activities, practices, and community outreach. The Government of Canada, for example, recently set the goal of achieving gender equity in the sport system by 2035. The government is taking an intersectional lens to the issue attentive to the unique struggles of multiple marginalized groups.<sup>xviii</sup> The City of Toronto also has a Sport Plan that includes “inclusive sport.”<sup>xix</sup> Demonstrating a commitment to this understanding and approach is key to potentially partnering, and receiving support and funding from like-minded government bodies, institutions, and corporations.

Canada’s major banks, such as Royal Bank of Canada, Scotiabank, and TD, understand the value of diversity and have aligned themselves with organizations and activities that support similar values. Most large corporations are moving towards progressive platforms in gender equity and diversity. Organizations will look toward other companies with a progressive stance on diversity and inclusion to partner as a positive representation of their values. The sporting sector is no different from other industries — the GTHL’s sponsors will be receptive to an increase in EDI initiatives and will further support the organization. Adding EDI initiatives and mandates to the GTHL brand strengthens its societal value.

The Committee reviewed, in different levels of depth, organizations that appeared to be making progress — non-profit, sporting, and corporate — from an external lens. An authentic and consistent effort supported by a strong structure and plan emerged as being key to success. Specifically, an EDI ecosystem of reinforcements at many different levels from leaders to volunteers/employees can be seen at some organizations. When viewing this specifically through the lens of education, EDI

learning modules, volunteer commitments, ongoing communication through social/newsletters and regular discussions all serve as an intentional reminder of the organization's EDI culture and commitment. This is maintained through consistent feedback, dedicated resources, inclusivity commitments (either through financial investments, program initiatives, and/or communications campaigns) and education. The GTHL may be larger or smaller than some of the organizations reviewed, however, the Committee highlighted some of the best practices that are broad and applicable to many organizations.

Six common best practice themes emerged:

1) **Ongoing, mandatory education (corporate):**

- a) An ongoing commitment to focused EDI learning (modules with both synchronous and asynchronous learning followed up by opportunities for further discussion in groups).
- b) An educational approach that comprises learning through definitions, information, and storytelling, incorporating a wide range of topics including self-awareness, micro-aggressions, privilege, and bias.
- c) Consistent measurement tools to collect feedback on whether the educational content is relevant, engaging, and impactful, which helps ensure consistent growth and success. For example, surveys about education are one tool for measurement.

2) **Dedicated resources (corporate, sports organizations):** Volunteers and EDI Officers whose job it is to focus on EDI.

3) **Open commitment to acknowledge and fight against systemic racism:**

A clear statement that hate against any group will not be tolerated. At the same time, in some cases, a commitment to use the organization's platform to fight against systemic racism and discrimination.

4) **Right to participate and be yourself:** A strong mandate that everyone has the right to participate equally and free of discrimination.

5) **Community engagement:** Encourage diversity through supporting communities through outreach and connection. Engage individuals with lived experience to share their stories and provide feedback. This is often done through communication, social media, and cultural relevancy.

6) **Consistency:** The recognition that a strong EDI mandate is not something to be solved but an ongoing, consistent effort.

While all the areas identified are important, the Committee identified three themes that are pertinent for action and impact within the GTHL:

- Education modules that focus specifically on EDI for the whole organization that are appropriate, engaging, and relevant

- Dedicated resources whether volunteer or otherwise to support and advance EDI at all levels, and for all Member organizations within the GTHL
- Commitment to a welcoming culture and clear, often bold messaging about acceptance

Below is a wide array of organizations' approach to EDI. The examples are meant to provide a snapshot of some of the work and approaches. In some cases, the organization is rooted in EDI principles and in others, there are strong dedicated and advanced EDI programs. Examples of EDI campaigns are also highlighted. Some examples are more limited, with EDI being addressed on their websites through mission statements.

The Committee notes that the following examples are only a few highlights of current work being done and how EDI is reflected in the organizations through their websites. This list is not exhaustive and does not include all the work being done in EDI by organizations.

**Table 3**  
*Organizations With Dedicated EDI Programs*

Organization	Action	Resource
<b>Corporate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Scotiabank Diversity and Inclusion</a></li> <li>▪ RBC <a href="#">commitment to Diversity and Inclusion</a> — regular measurement and review of policies as well as an <a href="#">Action Plan Against System Racism</a>.</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">TD Diversity and Inclusion</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Bank of Montreal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">CIBC – Inclusion and Diversity – Our Communities</a> - variety of partnerships</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Nike Diversity and Inclusion</a></li> </ul>	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Scotiabank supports ERGs</a> (Employee Resource Groups) — grassroots initiatives that celebrate diversity and foster inclusion.</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">RBC Diversity and Inclusion Blueprint</a></li> <li>▪ BMO's Zero Barriers to Inclusion 2025 is a multi-year strategy that supports equity, equality, and inclusion.</li> <li>▪ Nike: EDI Strategy — <a href="#">Creating systemic solutions is key to driving progress</a> -- <a href="#">Employee Networks</a></li> </ul>
<b>Toronto District</b>	"Every student is capable of success. Our focus is ensuring that all students can	<a href="#">Enhancing equity at TDSB</a>

<b>School Board — TDSB</b>	<p>succeed by having access — the same pass — to opportunities, learning, resources, and tools, to improve the outcomes of the most marginalized students. That’s equity.</p> <p>To do this, the TDSB has made a bold commitment to equity, human rights, anti-racism, and anti-oppression. This sets the foundation to support those traditionally and currently underserved and will raise the bar for all students.”</p> <p>Accessible Communications for parents:  <a href="#">Accessibility of Communications</a></p> <p><a href="#">Offer key forms and parent communications in many different languages</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Professional Learning Providing mandatory learning for school leadership in human rights, anti-oppression, and anti-racism</li> <li>▪ Identifying and examining the impact of bias, power and privilege on student achievement and well-being</li> <li>▪ Building capacity among leaders to facilitate learning in human rights, equity, and anti-oppression</li> <li>▪ Providing employees tools and professional resources to understand and respond effectively to various forms of discrimination</li> <li>▪ Reporting of suspected Wrongdoing (Whistleblowing)</li> </ul>
<b>Government, health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council</b> - “The Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council’s mandate is to provide Government with insight and advice on how to support efforts to address racism and promote more inclusive and accepting communities across Alberta.”</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Ontario Health: Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, Anti-racism</a></li> <li>▪ <b>Sick Kids:</b> “Together we need to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable being themselves, is engaged and empowered to share their ideas... Our capacity to deliver on our vision of 'Healthier Children. A Better World.' is dependent on our ability to provide an inclusive space for everyone in the SickKids community.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Alberta Anti-Racism Report</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-Racism Framework</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Sick Kids Action Plan</a></li> </ul> <p>*Includes discussion of micro-aggressions</p>

<b>NHL – professional hockey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NHL “Hockey is for everyone”</li> <li>▪ LA Kings Launch Inclusion Initiative to Build Equity in hockey</li> </ul> <p>“The goal is to contribute to the fight to end racism by tackling the systemic issues in our city and industry, while creating opportunity and equity in hockey.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hockey Diversity Alliance</li> </ul> <p>“We strive to create sustainable change at all levels of hockey. At the top, we will educate and encourage accountability from our leagues and leaders. At the grassroots level, we will work to ensure hockey is accessible to anyone who loves the game.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">NHL Driving social change and foster more inclusive communities</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">The LA Kings Inclusion Initiative</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Diversity Alliance</a> – To eradicate systemic racism and intolerance in hockey.</li> </ul>
<b>Paralympics</b>	<p>“Safe Sport — The Canadian Paralympic Committee believes that everyone involved in sport has the right to participate in a safe and inclusive environment free of abuse, harassment or discrimination.”</p>	<p><a href="#">Diversity and Inclusion Quiz</a> for organizations to see and identify their strengths and weaknesses.</p>
<b>Hockey Canada</b>	<p>“Hockey Canada Mandates mandatory diversity and inclusion events for National players, teams and staff.”</p>	<p><a href="#">Hockey Canada</a></p>
<b>Ontario Hockey League (OHL)</b>	<p>The Ontario Hockey League created the newly created role of Director of Cultural Diversity and Inclusion to establish and lead a committee that provides guidance and expertise to the League and teams to help ensure that the game is inclusive for all players, staff, and fans.</p>	<p><a href="#">What is the OHL doing to promote diversity in the league?</a> [Video]</p>
<b>College Hockey for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</b>	<p>“A coalition of NCAA student-athletes, coaches, and administrators have come together to establish the College Hockey for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative.”</p>	<p><a href="#">College Hockey for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative</a></p>
<b>Community organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “British Swimming (together with Swim England) has worked hard to achieve and maintain the Equality Standards for Sport.”</li> <li>▪ North Toronto Soccer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">British Swimming EDI initiative</a> (action plan)</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">North Toronto Soccer</a> (Equity policy)</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Baseball Canada</a> (policy)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseball Canada</li> </ul>	
<b>You Can Play Project</b>	<p>The You Can Play Project works to ensure the safety and inclusion for all who participate in sports, including LGBTQ+ athletes, coaches, and fans. We achieve this by creating a community of allies that can foster a true sense of belonging. This becomes possible when sports teams sharpen the focus on the person's skills, work ethic, and competitive spirit, not their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.</p>	<a href="#">You Can Play Project</a>
<b>Examples of campaigns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>#Football Moves People</b> - The Migration Museum is celebrating South London's football heroes in our window display this summer. The display honours footballers from all backgrounds who have changed the men's and women's game and made a difference to our local community – as nominated by fans – through a social media callout.</li> <li>▪ <b>BAUER – The Barn</b> - A place where all are equal, and all are welcome – encouraging players to share their experience.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">#FootballMovesPeople</a> <a href="#">Welcome to The Barn</a>
<b>MLSE</b>	<p>"We know that discrimination based on identity and racism exists in our society and has impacted our own company in different ways including our employees, fans, teams, and partners. MLSE's stand is simple — we will not tolerate discrimination and hate directed towards any group. More than that, we will use our platform and influence to lead in the fight against systemic racism and the increasing social injustices faced by many with overlapping identities including Black, Indigenous, persons of colour (BIPOC), women, 2SLGBTQIA+ and persons with disabilities."</p>	<p><a href="#">MLSE's commitment to address systemic racism and support social justice.</a></p> <p>MLSE's four EDI priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Team and Performance Influence</li> <li>▪ Inclusive Culture</li> <li>▪ Community Engagement</li> <li>▪ Partners and suppliers</li> </ul>



<b>Name Changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Edmonton Elks</li> <li>▪ Cleveland Guardians</li> <li>▪ Ryerson University</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">CFL's Edmonton Eskimos dropping 'Eskimo' from team name</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Cleveland changing name from Indians to Guardians after 2021 season</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Update on finding new name for the university</a></li> </ul>
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## Education and Culture

### Current State of GTHL Education

The GTHL has several different training programs offered through RESPECT in Sport, a leader in online learning targeting the athletic community for over 20 years. The program offers extensive educational modules with the hope of strengthening organizations through laying a foundation of safety and respect. All modules are conducted online, with a range of completion times from sixty minutes up to two and a half hours.

At present, stakeholders within the GTHL engage with different modules.

- **Parents** – RESPECT in Sport Parent Program is mandatory for at least one parent per household (however, it is important to note, that if parents live in different households, both are not required to complete the module). If parents do not complete the program, the player will not be approved to be on a GTHL roster
- **Players** – Currently no mandated programs for players within the GTHL exist. Rationale for this stems from the wide range of ages (specifically the young ages of players and the debate as to their capacity to absorb the information)
- **Team officials (Managers, Coaches, Bench Staff, Trainers, and Head Coach)** - RESPECT in Sport Activity Leader is mandatory- see more information below
- **Game Officials** – RESPECT in Sport for Officials is mandatory
- **GTHL staff** – Access to the program but not mandatory to participate
- **Board Members** - Access to the program but not mandatory to participate
- **Directors, Officers & Employees of GTHL Members** - Access to the programs but not mandatory to participate

- **Executives** – Those with access to the programs but not mandatory to participate

The Committee recognizes the extensive foundation of RESPECT in Sport's educational modules, and the learning opportunities it has afforded to hundreds of thousands of athletes, parents, and team officials. The modules address the safety and well-being of stakeholders. Further, the values of equity, diversity and inclusion exist in the modules. The programs have a recent module (2020) that includes content on systemic racism, microaggressions and unconscious bias. RESPECT in Sport – Activity Leader, launched in July 2019 with modules including Aboriginal Awareness in the Context of Sport, Transgender Awareness (2SLGBTQIA+) and Gender Equity. The RESPECT in Sport Activity Leader program is designed to educate individuals 13 years and older who coach, train, referee, officiate, or mentor. The modules are updated every four years, however, GTHL team officials are not required to re-certify, so some current team officials may not have completed the updated modules. Currently, there are 6000-7000 team officials.

While there is education in place, it is important to note that the Committee heard from stakeholders that the modules can feel like a "check and click exercise" with little opportunity for further engagement through personal stories or ongoing EDI learning. With a few exceptions, EDI is not a prevalent or an intentional theme in the current education offered for GTHL athletes, parents, staff, and Board Members. The overarching goal of the modules appears to address safety and well-being of stakeholders. While this is critically important, safety and well-being for everyone cannot be addressed effectively without a strong focus on EDI that is reinforced through intentional learning, conversation, culture, and representation.

Furthermore, the GTHL's educational modules are mandated only once (usually at the start of the competitive season) without subsequent follow-ups, refreshers, or discussion opportunities. Best practice demonstrated through the Committee's review shows EDI education must be intentional, consistent, and supported by leadership at all levels to be effective.

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## **Educational Findings**

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The Committee looked at the quantitative survey, interviews, focus groups, and literature reviews (including best practices in other organizations) for this report's educational findings and recommendations. Three major themes emerged from the Committee's review. They are as follows:

### **Lack of Recall of EDI Education**

Through its work, the Committee was unable to identify any specific area of education that is dedicated solely to EDI. Across areas of investigation, including the interviews and focus groups, the Committee identified an overall lack of recall on EDI education within the GTHL. According to the comments and discussions during the interviews

with equity-seeking groups, some stakeholders could not remember or identify EDI education, as it does not presently exist as a standalone module. However, this was not found in the survey results, which highlighted the viewpoints of the majority – not of equity-seeking groups.

Currently, the GTHL requires education through RESPECT in Sport for parents, activity leaders and officials, which has some content on systemic racism, microaggressions and unconscious biases with new modules in 2020 as part of the program. It is important to note, however, that RESPECT in Sport modules, although available to the GTHL Board, GTHL Staff, Members' boards, and their staff, is not mandated to complete.

### **Humanized Education needed**

The Committee's review suggests that the current educational approach lacks human connection and influence. Although mandated, the GTHL's current educational mandate is not reaching its full potential, as several points of contact with stakeholders indicated that the modules at times are regarded as a simple 'check the box' exercise.

*"What the GTHL needs is to have someone — someone the kids might actually respect — come out and physically talk to them before or after a game for a few minutes to discuss racism and discrimination."*

*Survey participant*

Best practice supports that culturally relevant angles make EDI education impactful with the goal being that the participant comes away with knowledge, motivation, and a sense of "why". The message, delivered through relevant themes, must demonstrate how an understanding of EDI benefits *them*, both in hockey and in life.

The GTHL has an opportunity to make its education as it relates to EDI more accessible and humanized. For example, as previously mentioned in this report, the notion of using notable GTHL Alumni as role models (i.e., individuals that have seen success within the game of hockey) to talk about EDI through their lived experiences, may help contextualize the education and make it more impactful. In some instances, educational modules are carried out through team officials and/or individuals that are not personally connected to the content. It is imperative the instructor (especially when discussing sensitive topics) has a solid understanding and foundation of the material, to humanize and put into context. The Committee also notes that education can come in many sizes and shapes, and that there is power in storytelling and sharing of experiences. The notion of having annual town halls to discuss EDI and share stories may also be impactful for all stakeholders, while bringing the GTHL community together, and providing feedback to the league's governance.

Additionally, one of the rare benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the exponential growth of online learning platforms and modules that are tailored to

keeping individuals engaged. In person learning is always beneficial, but the Committee understands the need for online modules given the sheer mass and size of the GTHL. To that end, exploring supplementary platforms targeted for specific subject matter may help humanize and more effectively change hearts, minds, and behaviour.

*"There needs to be a cultural change. More can be done about education, not just a read and click. I would have liked to have seen discussions on the recent racial uprising and how that impacted the game of hockey.... More can be done about breaking down the barriers that makes hockey be considered an elitist sport...."*

*Survey participant*

Another finding was that education should be ongoing throughout the year, and not simply a mandatory training session at the beginning of the season for those who have not previously completed it. Individuals stated that the sole educational training at the beginning of the season was not strong enough to last throughout the year, and additional touch points are necessary to ensure that the values of EDI are being lived throughout the GTHL. Consistency in education helps keep the lessons top of mind, has the power to aid individuals in recognizing microaggressions, and holds all stakeholders accountable.

### **Rules: Not the sole issue**

The Committee found conflicting information in relation to the rules and regulations of the GTHL. In interviews, focus groups, and townhall, individuals brought up the need for change in certain circumstances related to the rules, regulations, and penalties around racist and discriminatory behaviour on and off the ice. The survey, however, identified that there were no issues with the actual rules of the GTHL specific to EDI or otherwise. To reconcile the conflict between the findings, specifically both that there are no problems with the Rules and that the Rules are inadequate, it is important to note that the current Rules that deal with the mechanism of the complaint – who to complain to, how to file a complaint, what should be included in a complaint – are not problematic. Those factors are clearly stated within the Rules. The larger problem, as found by the Committee, is that the existing Rules are deficient as they do not address the issues relating to EDI. Specifically, they lack the substance required to effectively change the underlying behaviours. It is this lack of EDI focus that creates tension and ultimately frustration for the stakeholders.

Penalizing or suspending an individual for their conduct is not necessarily the fastest way to change behaviour. Penalization or suspension, coupled with an educational component serves a dual purpose: it addresses the offending behaviour and presents

an opportunity for the individual to learn why their conduct was inappropriate. A culture shift supported by the GTHL, such as requiring educational opportunities alongside suspensions, could have impact by equipping and encouraging stakeholders to hold each other accountable and report offenses when they occur.

*"While the GTHL trains its staff that the players safety is ensured, more communication of rules regarding racism and discrimination should be directed towards players and parents."*

*Survey participant*

The interviews, focus groups, townhall, and the information gathered, establish that the rules in place are inadequate to address the real issues of discrimination within the GTHL because they are not effectively changing behaviours or educating participants. It further suggests that the rules do not provide the appropriate mechanisms to deal with racism and discrimination. Until recently, these issues were further exacerbated by the lack of transparency on the part of the GTHL when reporting and publicizing incidents of racism and discrimination. Moreover, many expressed that the regular communications of rules regarding racism and discrimination would be beneficial for clarity and understanding.

The GTHL Board did respond to these complaints by drafting a transparent report after consideration. For a more fulsome understanding of their response, please turn to the [Appendix of this report](#).

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## Summary

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For education to be memorable and impactful, the approach and content must be rooted in relevance and importance to all stakeholders. Given the incredible advances in online education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not surprising that the expectation of high production quality training should be the norm. To demonstrate a welcoming community, the presentation of the learning must have global appeal and be directed towards a diverse population. An engaging modular training program should address:

1. Why EDI is important to success in hockey (and life)
2. Current challenges and experiences of racism and discrimination in hockey
3. Key concepts around EDI — where bias comes from and how it is manifested
4. Ways in which individuals can take action to help create a more inclusive game
5. A pledge or call to action.

Allies can be used as opinion leaders — hockey players, team official, and scouts to reinforce why EDI is critical to success. There is tremendous benefit from hearing from women and diverse players in hockey. Through this approach, the GTHL has an opportunity to lead with education and be proactive when setting expectations for all stakeholders instead of reactive through a lack of clear EDI messaging, which could potentially lead to more of the details being sorted out through the rules or disciplinary stage. The Committee believes that through intentional education and related cultural changes there is an opportunity to change behaviour. The impact will be a reduction in the number of complaints by providing clarity through education and an intentionally welcoming culture.

As explained, the GTHL does not require education specific to EDI for all stakeholders. Currently, the goal of the training modules appears to be to address the safety and well-being of stakeholders. While this is critically important, safety and well-being for everyone cannot be addressed effectively without a strong focus on EDI. Review and experience have shown that biases can creep into the hockey experience in ways that may not be deliberate but are still problematic. Stereotypes and behaviours create barriers that potentially result in people from marginalized communities not feeling safe. A safe, welcoming, and supportive environment cannot be achieved without intentional EDI education and awareness as well as a shift in culture.

Education efforts work best when the culture unfailingly reinforces the EDI message throughout the organization with all stakeholders. To achieve a cultural shift, the Committee makes recommendations that enable intentional EDI learning to be supported by ongoing programs and efforts (i.e., Chief Inclusion Officer, Hockey Weekend, Parent Representatives). The goal of these programs and efforts is to bring consistent awareness of EDI and to put in place a structure that allows the GTHL to connect with stakeholders, including players of all ages. The programs will bring the EDI learning to life using tactics such as personal stories and opportunities to talk about racism and discriminatory practices. Players will be required to complete EDI education through engaging and age-appropriate methods that share why EDI is important in hockey and in life.

### Further Insights: Costs and Inequity

At every stage of research, discussions, and investigations by the Committee on the issues of EDI the single most consistent and repeated issue that arose was the concern, real or perceived, that youth hockey was excessively expensive. This is often coupled with the belief that costs charged by certain clubs or teams are inappropriately or unnecessarily high. Regardless of the exactitude of such beliefs, it is indicative of the lack of trust of many families in the GTHL and its Member clubs' organization and operations.

This is relevant to the Committee's mandate to the extent that it is a barrier to entry for players and families that are the focus of inequity in the GTHL. It is also relevant

to note that in the process of information gathering as it relates to EDI, it was consistent that given the opportunity to discuss issues, people quickly raised the point of costs even when it was not the focus of the discussion.

*"The worst case of discrimination I have seen is not directly related to race or ethnicity but more so wealth. I have had 2 sons play for paid coaches and preference has always been given to the parents/families that were able to easily agree with additional costs etc."*

*Survey participant*

There is a delineation on the issue between House League and Competitive Leagues. Where House League hockey is generally affordable in relation to other team sports in Toronto, the dynamics of the additional time, fees, better equipment, training, and travel for competitive divisions increases costs significantly. Such premium generally increases as the competitive level increases from Select through to AAA. At the AA and AAA level there is the additional factor of players and families who want (and can afford) to pursue additional private training and tournaments outside of team sessions to improve their competitive position within their team and the league.

*"To my knowledge, the GTHL has done little to ensure opportunity for all youngsters. There are socio-economic barriers that have largely been ignored; does not bode well for the future of the sport, all the way up to the NHL."*

*Survey participant*

A final factor that is harder to define is the perceived or real premium in costs for competitive hockey at the AA and AAA level driven by the critical mass of the competitive hockey market in the GTA. This can be found in the number of hockey schools and camps, paid team officials, transfers of control of clubs, international tournaments, and the increasing fees payable for players and families. This is coupled with the difficulty in being aware of and understanding the alternatives, and how to navigate the process. There is an underlying feeling that a minority are offered better opportunities to get ahead based on ability to afford, relationships, and understanding how to navigate the culture of the higher competitive levels of the GTHL. The Committee understands that the GTHL has a growing Legacy Fund and Jumpstart program, which may be used as a resource to assist affordability for participation in the GTHL based on financial need. The Committee recognizes that the demand for financial assistance is greater today than it has been in the past, and this may present a challenge to the GTHL. Nonetheless, the GTHL should continue working to create a more financially accessible space for all players.



For families that are newer to the GTHL, new to Canadian culture, and have limited resources this creates a significant barrier to either compete or compete successfully. It also creates the perception of a closed-door culture for competitive youth hockey surrounded by unwritten rules and favouritism. Although the Committee's focus is EDI – through Education, Governance and Culture – high costs to play hockey maintain structures of inequity in the GTHL. One of the systemic barriers to moving the needle is the cost to play. The organization will need to consider alternative approaches to include those from underrepresented and underserved groups. The Committee has incorporated these findings and presented solutions within this report's recommendations. For further explanation and details, please visit the [appendix](#).

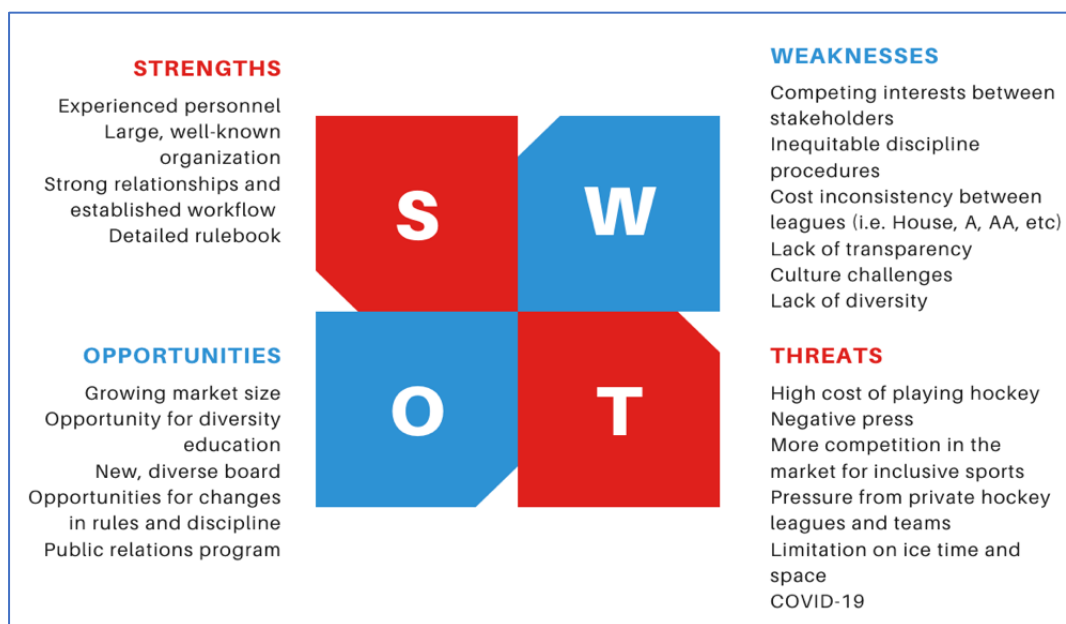
## SWOT Analysis

One step in considering the GTHL's current position and future strategies for addressing racism and EDI within its organization was to complete a baseline SWOT analysis. The following is a broad-based analysis that does not specifically focus on EDI but rather the overall position of the GTHL. The objective was to have a platform of impartial characteristics of the GTHL to reflect upon when considering the issues, options, and opportunities for the GTHL in addressing discrimination and racism.

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is a framework used to evaluate an organization's competitive position and to develop strategic planning for sustainability and growth. Here are some of the top-level findings.

**Figure 1**  
*Swot Analysis*





## Strengths

To expand on the above, strengths are the capabilities and resources that the GTHL can leverage to undertake its mission statement, stated goals, and build a sustainable growing league at multiple levels that can adapt to the changes in the community it serves and the game of hockey. Here are some of the GTHL's strengths:

### Human Resources

The day-to-day operations of the GTHL are run by an experienced full-time staff of 15, with an experienced Chief Operating Officer who has been in the role for over 20 years and prior thereto with the GTHL as its Executive Director. Managing a portfolio of over 70,000 games a year (pre-pandemic) and over 450 referees, the GTHL is well staffed, with senior positions having specific roles related to scheduling, officiating, marketing and communications, hockey and coach development, Membership management, ice contracts, league coordination and accounting. All support staff report to the COO. The COO in turn reports to a large Board of Directors of seventeen Members.

The GTHL Board is made up of individuals with a broad range of skills and experience in the league. This experience stems from club and team management, playing and coaching hockey in the GTHL, major professional backgrounds in marketing, law, accounting and finance, business management and education amongst others. The GTHL has evolved its Board governance rules to follow best practices with similar organizations of size including Board terms, diversity, and skill sets (i.e., finance, sports management, marketing). It is important to note that the GTHL Board adopted and implemented the Committee's recommendations on governance change to reflect best practices in EDI in the Spring of 2021.

## **Financial Resources**

The GTHL has a long-standing history of financial independence and self-sufficiency, operating without subsidies from any government body (pre-COVID-19 pandemic). The well recognized brand name and size, reaching a range of families and individuals, enables the GTHL to attract significant corporate sponsorship from leading Canadian institutions such as Schedule A Banks and large, well known private corporations. The GTHL's status as a not-for-profit organization ensures that all sponsorship and donation funding it receives is used to pay for its operations and reduce the cost to play hockey for its players.<sup>1</sup>

## **Physical Resources**

The GTA's long standing passion for hockey and its role in the culture and communities the GTHL serves has given rise to a significant number of indoor arenas. These are largely owned and operated by the municipalities in which they are located, or by private owners who specialize in the ownership and operation of arenas as well as the organization and management of tournaments and camps for youth hockey. Arena facilities including multi pad complexes are often combined with hockey training centres and centres of expertise. Many of these are near the 400-series highways with a mix of municipal and privately owned complexes. The GTHL has a centralized head office in Scotiabank Pond with modern offices, boardrooms, and communication systems.

## **Past Experiences and Successes**

The GTHL has a broad reach both geographically and in levels of play, including a wide variety of programs offered from House League to the AAA Competitive level and from age 5 to 21 years old. Its scope, as well as its large player pool, make the GTHL one of the most competitive youth leagues in the world. The GTHL is therefore able to attract a large base of volunteers at all levels from parents to ex-professional players as well as attract significant levels of talent in its team officials, referees, and trainers. The GTHL also benefits from limited competition in the community it serves (school hockey and a few small outlier leagues).

The GTHL has deep relationships with the Ontario Hockey Federation and Hockey Canada, and often receives support for GTHL initiatives. Also present are strong relationships with existing suppliers and major corporations, and strong brand awareness not only within its own market, but also across youth hockey provincially, nationally, and internationally.

The GTHL has developed several resources and communication strategies, including Break Out Magazine, social media, active online presence, marketing campaigns like "I Play in the G", RESPECT in Sport training modules, and structured programs and initiatives at the grass roots level such as Learn to Play.

## **Activities and Processes**

Through its size and years of existence, the GTHL has evolved a highly detailed set of rules to govern a very broad range of operational, organizational and behaviour management issues. While providing structure, the GTHL is also able to regularly

examine and adjust rules by means of its Rules Committee of the Board, with changes brought to its Members for a vote on a semi-annual basis. Decades of experience in being tested and challenged in its rules has resulted in a detailed enforcement structure, discipline hearings, and defined penalties.

The GTHL has been Nationally and Internationally recognized as having proactive leadership in youth hockey, and the GTHL was an early adopter of policy changes such as: removal of bodychecking in A hockey, rules to reduce head contact, concussion management and reporting, financing reporting, Learn to Play, Game On Stream, and cross ice play. A key leadership event was The Transition Game Summit in November 2019, which launched the league's Strategic Plan beginning in the 2021-22 season through to the 2023-24 campaign with four key pillars:

- The Game: Make hockey child centric in the GTHL
- The Community: Engage the community to provide a re-imagined game that reflects the traditions and cultures of the GTA
- The Organizations: The organization reflects its community, and the community reflects the organization
- Stewardship: How the league will retain and advance the athlete, family, and volunteer

## **Summary**

The GTHL is a world leader in several ways as it relates to youth hockey. The league's talent pool is large and attracts new talent from various parts of the world. The GTHL has shown that it can recruit stakeholders to ensure competitive seasons are successful (i.e., human resources of referees, linesman, team officials). The GTHL also has longstanding access to the physical infrastructure (i.e., arenas), that allow for a competitive season, which spans 70,000 regulation games (pre-COVID-19 pandemic) across a variety of competitive levels.

The GTHL has a rich history of success, and because of such success, there is a complex and ever evolving infrastructure of rules and regulations both on and off the field of play. The GTHL also has strong leadership, and a proven track record of being early adopters of hockey initiatives, on and off the ice. Consequently, the GTHL is recognized as a powerful leader in youth hockey, is respected for the program it offers, and the talent that has graduated from its program to play at the collegiate or professional level. This provides the GTHL with a unique position in Canada to be a leader in change and new initiatives.

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## **Weaknesses**

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At the same time, as part of the internal analysis and review, the Committee identified weaknesses within the GTHL that potentially could hinder growth and the necessary actions for effective change.

Weaknesses in specific areas, capabilities or skills are lacking within the organization. They limit the ability of the GTHL to undertake its mission statement, reach goals and build a sustainable growing league at multiple levels that can adapt to the changes in the community and the game of hockey.

### **Activities and Processes — Fragmentation, Inconsistencies, and Inequity**

There are some inconsistencies in GTHL activities and processes, which can present as a weakness to the organization. First, the GTHL is quite large. They require a consistency in rules and enforcement, which can be difficult in an organization of this size. This leads to an inconsistency in discipline between cases, with a lack of both time and personnel to tailor concessions to all incidents. Similarly, there seems to be an ineffectiveness and inconsistency in the complaint process, discipline, and application of the rules, with a perceived favouritism towards older clubs, team officials who have been in the GTHL for a longer period, and better players. Thus, parents and players have expressed a reluctance to file complaints for fear of retribution.

The excessive competitive nature of many clubs within the GTHL is another weakness. A focus on winning at all costs in Select, A, AA, and AAA clubs can lead to rule infractions related to team building, inequality of playing time, favouritism, and even financial impropriety. The greatest complaint here is the lack of player development in favour of recruiting and over-playing stronger players. When coupled with the long-standing unspoken barriers on registering concerns or complaints for fear of retribution, there is a dysfunctional overall approach to the formation of teams, player development, transparency, and overall culture of the competitive levels of the GTHL. One supports the other creating a circular reference that needs to be disconnected.

The GTHL is also dominated by clubs with limited operational and financial transparency, and in many cases - real or perceived - a focus on profitability, despite their not-for-profit status, which can increase costs for families and players, and encourage favouritism. In addition, not all clubs offering competitive hockey relate to House League programs, which has had a negative impact on recreational hockey participation. There is ultimately an inconsistency in the club model with a wide variation in the types of programming offered. For example, some clubs offer House League, Select and competitive hockey, and others only offer competitive hockey. Furthermore, not all clubs offer teams for all age groups and all competitive levels (recognizing that the AAA level operates through 12 separate clubs who only provide AAA level hockey). This can lead to significant inconsistency at competitive levels and can become a struggle to attract players (at times, seeing teams fold at certain ages and competitive levels) leaving players stranded.

### **Human Resources, Rules, and Culture**

The GTHL also faces weaknesses from cultural, regulatory, and structural challenges. Although the GTHL has a dedicated staff of 15, the complexity of the league's schedule and operations requires staff to balance many tasks and fulfill multiple roles at once. As in any industry, this can lead to an overworked staff, which can ultimately

create weaknesses for the entire organization. Similarly, the Board of Directors is large, and has struggled with diversity of thought (*it is important to note that the GTHL Board adopted and is working towards full implementation of the Committee's recommendations on governance change to reflect best practices in EDI in the Spring of 2021*). The GTHL also should improve the level of transparency it requires from its member Clubs operations, finances, and decision making outside of House League.

With its limited resources, the GTHL staff and Board must sometimes decide to spend more resources and time on competitive levels, which sacrifices attention to House League. The weakness in this area is that House League has the greatest number of players and is a significant pipeline to growing the game.

Parents and players also report discrimination and cultural challenges from parents, players, and team officials. This can include but is not limited to offensive language, threatening behaviour, racist comments, demeaning references to women and sexual orientation. Offensive behaviour and discrimination may detract new players and families from playing hockey or discourage families from continuing to participate in the sport. This behaviour can be found in numerous places including, but not limited to: on the ice, in arenas, in the locker room, on the bench, in the stands, and on social media.

Another weakness is the perception that referees do not have the power to enforce certain rules, particularly in relation to racist, homophobic, sexist, and crude behaviour. The GTHL's sheer number of stakeholders, including more than 40,000 participants (pre-COVID-19 pandemic), may weaken the organization's enforcement of discipline for the behaviour noted above. The sheer volume of volunteer team officials, and part time referees/on ice officials can lead to inconsistent checks and balances for said stakeholder's qualifications to carry out their assigned tasks.

Finally, the GTHL has historically struggled to recruit new Canadians and Canadians from underserved communities. Leadership, including team officials and referees, are largely controlled by, or populated with white individuals. Furthermore, from House League to competitive hockey, most participants are white — in a city that is one of the most multicultural in the world.

## **Financial Resources**

Financial resources also present a barrier to the GTHL. The cost to play is in many cases expensive, compared to other sports. However, House League hockey is only marginally more expensive than other youth sport options.

Competing at the Select or competitive level is significantly more expensive due to additional ice time, more expensive equipment, the need for a vehicle to transport players to games and practices, team officials paid directly by parents, and an organizational structure that allows some clubs to generate a financial surplus, driving up costs to play competitive hockey.

This limits the scope of the GTHL's audience and can present barriers to marginalized and underserved communities who wish to participate in the sport. Ultimately, this is a challenge for the GTHL and for its diversity mandate.

## **Summary**

The GTHL's sheer mass of stakeholders requires a significant number of resources (both human and material) and leads to a system that is often taxed. The GTHL's operation requires a dedicated number of staff that at times can become overloaded. The long history of rules and regulations is complex, which can be confusing for stakeholders to navigate, and the sheer size of the league, although known to be proactive in several ways, struggles to be dynamic and malleable in real time. Perceived or real financial inconsistencies of clubs and teams, and the cost of hockey in and of itself, is a continuous frustration which can erode trust in governance.

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## **Opportunities**

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Opportunities are unrecognized, underappreciated or forgotten factors and developments that the GTHL can leverage. These opportunities may allow the GTHL to better undertake its mission statement, stated goals and build a sustainable growing league at multiple levels that can adapt to the changes in the community it serves.

The GTHL has taken many positive steps forward and is providing leadership to youth hockey in Canada in undertaking the Transition Game Summit and resulting four pillar Strategic Plan. However, over the last few decades, the population and demographic base of the GTHL's market has grown immensely and will continue to do so. This presents the GTHL with two big challenges: how to maintain its traditional loyal base and how to cater to new populations. The GTHL's participation numbers are not in tandem with the population growth and in fact are at times declining. This has been further amplified by COVID-19. Regaining ground after the pandemic is that much harder when previously experiencing participation declines. Subject to limitations on ice time to accommodate more participants, there is significant opportunity and need for the GTHL to grow its base, grow the game, introduce new Canadians to hockey and a sport culture rooted in respect at all levels — and thereby advancing its EDI initiatives while regaining its participation levels.

## **Human Resources**

Given that the GTHL is situated in one of the largest cities in North America (that is both the most multicultural city in the world as well as one of the most passionate about hockey), there are several resources and opportunities that the GTHL can tap into.

Reaching out to different cultural sectors of the GTA to attract leaders and volunteers on both an individual and a community group basis to get them involved in youth hockey is a significant opportunity for the GTHL. The greater the participation numbers from historically underserved communities, the greater likelihood of growing the game further from underserved communities and participants. This can

start at both the grass roots level with teams but also at the club level. The GTHL could mandate, and at least strongly encourage, clubs to formulate new governance rules for Clubs that:

- Adopt the Board Governance rules recently passed and enacted by the GTHL Board to appoint diverse Board Members and Officers.
- Expand their Membership with voting rights to a broader set of people who are active with the Club in one form or another

## **Financial Resources**

Institutions and organizations are providing funding to enterprises that invest in EDI. There are several organizations doing similar EDI work, whom the GTHL can partner and collaborate with. New participants, families and cultures can lead to new consumer preferences and tastes which in turn can create new business lines, sponsorship, and financial alternatives for the GTHL to reduce costs for participants.

Given the higher costs of participating in the competitive levels of the GTHL, financial assistance programs based on a financial needs test could be further developed. The GTHL has a built-in opportunity to do this through its Legacy Fund. The management committee or an advisory board of the Fund could be developed to include both key sponsors interested in connecting to the multicultural community of the GTA through hockey as well as members of different cultural community groups. Collaboratively, they could perhaps identify sponsors with families who are interested in playing and need financial assistance to have their children participate. Given that the GTHL has always remained self-sufficient without subsidization from any government body, it could explore government funding to reduce costs for those that meet financial needs tests.

Sponsors to the GTHL Fund could include adult and professional leagues - including the NHL - who see the GTHL as a leader in youth hockey making progressive change that betters the game and is in keeping with Canada's overall multicultural growth and character.

At the higher competitive levels, the GTHL is attracting players from outside of the country that are as far reaching as China, Japan, and Russia. The GTHL should explore the opportunities to hold international tournaments with the assistance of related racialized members of the GTA community as both an increase in exposure for sponsors and a potential new source of tournament revenues.

## **Physical Resources**

One of the largest challenges that faces hockey is the availability of ice time and cost to create new arenas which are extremely challenging business propositions for the private sector. The GTHL could consider building a working relationship with the administrative and political figures of the various municipalities it serves to lobby for new arena facilities particularly as it relates to Planning Act Section 37 revenues from development projects and facilities that also serve schools. This could include the conversion of outdoor rinks that can be upgraded to enclosed arenas.

The GTHL could also work closer with the Municipalities and major private arena owners to find arrangements that reduce or eliminate ice time buyers and resellers to reduce overall costs.

### **Past Experiences and Successes**

The organization should look to past experiences and success and realize that they have a strong track record of adapting to change and becoming leaders in youth hockey. This is often best instituted through positive reinforcement to affect behaviour modification and significant shifts in culture of an organization.

The GTHL could create an award system that is of interest and value to those that the GTHL wants to affect change (clubs, team officials, players) that creates change through positive benefits. This could include players volunteering in the community to improve the culture and connectivity between different demographic groups. The GTHL may create programs to recognize or reward examples of “Good Practices” to make positive change to hockey culture through positive rather than negative reinforcement.

Furthermore, alumni groups are often powerful connectors, reconnectors, and sources of support for many groups. The GTHL has decades of alumni who share some of the best years and hours of their youth competing with and against each other who could facilitate forming alumni clubs. As they organically grow, they can be centres of influence, resources and supporters of new initiatives and overall promoters of the GTHL.

### **Activities and Processes**

The GTHL has a broad and significant following. There is an opportunity to undertake a proactive communications campaign that dispels some of the myths about the GTHL and youth hockey. This could include but is not limited to a wide range of topics spanning from GTHL governance, the nature and character of the volunteers at the Board and Club levels, and the GTHL staff. The organization may also consider making available summaries on GTHL operations and functions, clarity on common points of misconception, as well as summaries on how and why new rules are made. Of note, one misconception that could be addressed is the cost of hockey in the GTHL. To help shed light on this, Clubs’ financial statements should be audited (or regularly reviewed) to provide greater transparency for families as to where their money is going.

A communications campaign would assist in creating a transparent environment for all players and families to feel welcome and participate in hockey including positive incentives for Clubs and teams to recruit and appoint team officials with diverse skill sets.

There has long been a need in the GTHL to improve connections and alliances between house leagues and competitive leagues to create a more consistent club structure and quality of experience for stakeholders. The GTHL could encourage players in the competitive leagues to become engaged at the house league level as



volunteers. This could help link competitive clubs who do not have a house league program, and those that require a greater connection to a competitive club.

The high number of disputes and hearings each year in the GTHL is time consuming and provides a deep history of common issues and causes. The GTHL could explore an ADR process for complaints that is populated by a rotating panel of volunteers that are qualified in ADR for faster and less controversial resolutions of common issues.

As outlined in other sections of this report, the GTHL should create and implement a zero-tolerance policy for racism and discriminatory behaviour including a specific set of options for disciplinary action for offensive behaviour and repeat offenders. This could range from responding to various degrees on every instance of racism, intolerance, and discrimination regardless of severity. It also could aid in tracking repeat offenders and directing them to educational sessions (with the intent of ensuring behaviour change) before being able to return to the league in their previous capacity.

## **Summary**

The GTHL has a significant opportunity at present to engage a rapidly growing city to get involved in youth hockey. This is not only good for business, but also good for talent retention and creativity in operating. Proactive and consistent communication can help combat misconceptions around hockey culture, placing the GTHL as leaders in its evolution to one of respect at all levels.

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## **Threats**

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Threats are environmental factors and developments that can derail the ability of the GTHL to meet its stated objectives. Threats can emerge from various factors such as political developments & policy changes, technological innovations, economic growth and costs, changes in consumer preferences, and changes in participants' disposable income.

The GTHL's rich history and success at growing into the largest, most recognized youth hockey league in the world is a testament to its ability to face and succeed over a wide range of threats. Nevertheless, there are significant shifts in the community it serves that provide several threats the GTHL should recognize and consider countering, as follows:

## **Human Resources**

Given the sheer size of the GTHL, in relation to its dedicated staff of slightly more than a dozen individuals, burnout is a real threat to efficiency of workload. Lack of diversity in governance and stakeholders can lead to group think and stagnation.

Further, if the GTHL is restrained in its growth and ability to maintain status quo, it may lack the momentum to keep and attract quality employees. This becomes even more difficult if the GTHL is perceived as out of touch with EDI initiatives and other centres of concern that are increasing factors in employees' decision making when deciding where to work.

There is a double-edged sword issue in that more and more demands and responsibilities are being made of team officials and volunteers to meet the request for higher standards including improvements to hockey culture. Many of these involve substantial time and financial commitments and the assumption of significant liabilities for performance and grievances. As the demands continue to grow, the risk of attracting the quality of team officials and volunteers to meet the GTHL's needs is exposed to shortages and other alternatives. This is another reason for the change in culture and shift to respect at all levels which would remove many of the pressures and concerns that give rise to increased standards and demands.

Like many activities, businesses and interests, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the GTHL's participation and success. Given that the GTHL operates in indoor facilities that were largely shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic, the GTHL faces the risk of potential loss of talent and stakeholders (players, team officials, referees, sponsors, and volunteers, etc.) to alternative programs that formed and ran during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Financial Resources**

Growing inequality in income levels and related costs to play hockey, particularly at the competitive level, is the single most common complaint received. While house league hockey is relatively affordable, the competitive divisions become increasingly expensive. In some cases, it is for reasons that are beyond inflation or the function of normal supply and demand. The attraction for profit seekers to take advantage of the passion for competitive hockey in a city the size of Toronto at times pushes the boundaries of cost excessively. This increased exclusivity, pay to play, and favouritism reduces accessibility of competitive hockey to the broad community the GTHL serves. The practice of hockey schools and training companies buying up city ice and brokering it for profit is another dynamic. These are all factors that increase costs and are a financial threat to the overall accessibility of competitive hockey to a broader range of the community with limited resources.

The dynamic of private schools aligning themselves with AAA and AA league teams, can drive the cost of competitive hockey even farther to cover the costs of both private school programs and GTHL fees.

Government Regulations and Bureaucracy — The GTHL should keep a close eye on the fast-changing government regulations. The recent vaccine mandate is an example.

## **Physical Resources**

Increased popularity, availability, accessibility, infrastructure, and quality of other youth sports options such as soccer and basketball are a growing threat to youth hockey. They may grow as an even bigger threat if the GTHL is not able to enact some of the changes it requires.

The limitation on the ability to build new ice pads and arenas to service a growing demand to play may be a constraint if the GTHL's strategy is successful. This is further frustrated in the GTA area, by hockey schools, training camps and hockey businesses who buy up ice time to broker at higher costs.

In a city the size of Toronto - with the highest real estate values in Canada which are under constant upward pricing pressure and vertical densification - it is extremely difficult to secure land for the development and operation of new ice arenas. Creating alternatives for new indoor ice surfaces along with the curtailment of ice brokering operations should be a focus for the GTHL.

## **Past Experiences and Successes**

The growing public perception of hockey culture being inherently abusive and broken. Further negative press and reputation of hockey organizations as elitist, racist, old school, and the impact this can have on youth hockey in a larger way is a very real threat to the GTHL's standing and leadership role. While the GTHL Board has been proactive over the last 5 years in changing the culture of youth hockey, there is a general perception of resistance to change by some of the GTHL organizations during a time of broad and strong EDI movements at the community and corporate levels across Canada. If the GTHL and its Members do not join the movement they are at risk of being left behind, leading to loss of participation and support from sponsors.

There is a need to grow a new set of stories, heroes, successes, and positive outcomes to join the legion of legendary history and heroes of the GTHL from decades past. This could be partially achieved through the formation of Alumni Clubs over time who are recognized and provided visibility through the GTHL social media and in arena/ in person opportunities.

The long-standing, unwritten culture of hockey in Canada, while a well-loved and integral part of our society and identity, is also often off putting for new Canadians and the rapidly growing multi-cultural community that make up over 50% of the GTA population. There is a need to combine the positive features of its history and culture with new norms and traditions that are welcoming. As an example, the tradition of players meeting on the ice after a game for 5 minutes to say hello to or meet new friends on opposing teams (as they do in the NBA NFL, rugby, and many other highly competitive physical team sports) would send a powerful message that the culture of fear of physical reprisal after a game is a thing of the past.

## **Activities and Processes**

Another threat to the GTHL is the potential growth of private school leagues who can attract better players at the AA and AAA level resulting in competition with the GTHL.

The GTHL should continue to work with the various private schools with competitive hockey programs to bring them into the fold of the GTHL.

Given the impact of negative media coverage on the GTHL when unfortunate instances occur, there is a definite need for the GTHL to undertake a positive new and ongoing public relations campaign. Communication of positive news stories that support the many proactive initiatives, quality of its operations and the sheer number of people in the community it reaches and serves every year – are just some of the points that can be part of a new focus for such a campaign.

## **Summary**

The GTHL has significant threats including: the growing perception that hockey's culture is in direct need of change, rising costs from that require controlling, limitations on building new physical infrastructure and potential new competitive leagues are but some. However, there are solutions which, given the GTHL's size and history, can be achieved. Starting with a shift in culture and accessibility is key to many of them — and for others it will greatly ease the process.

## **Limitations**

Best practices were strived for in this analysis, however, there are some limitations that should be noted.

- The survey attempted to assess various perspectives of EDI and safety in the GTHL. Importantly, the survey did not specifically ask questions related to gender. It is possible and likely that gender concerns are greater than the results provided in our analysis. It is recommended that the GTHL provide a follow-up survey to better assess this issue. The results could provide insight as it relates to participation.
- Due to the scope of this project and time constraints, a small sample of stakeholders participated in the interviews and focus groups. The results provided therefore cannot be generalized. Instead, results from the interviews and focus groups offer an insight into a limited scope of experience and perspectives of some GTHL stakeholders.
- Many of the Committee members are not academic researchers, and therefore did not have all the resources and data necessary to complete an academic-level peer-reviewed research study. This study is more professional in nature, and readers must be aware that the checks and balances performed here are not to the calibre of a university study. Ultimately, there was limited access to data and participants. Participants in the survey came from a variety of sources, including parents, athletes, team officials, players and alumni affiliated with the GTHL. Response was voluntary, and therefore nonresponse bias does exist in the survey and resulting conclusions.
- Some bias may appear in the survey and focus group questions, due to the limited time provided to apply research methods to some of these studies.
- The Committee members are from a variety of cultural, professional, and academic backgrounds, and some bias may therefore appear in the results. Cultural bias may also appear in the form of sample selection bias, as response to the survey was voluntary. Subsequently, comments on the survey were voluntary and the focus groups were selected by the co-chairs of the Committee. The focus groups were chosen from a pool of candidates who expressed a concern with sex and gender-based discrimination in the Committee's survey. Those individuals were then placed into focus groups. This randomization, however, was not performed by a computer or neutral third party, and the focus groups are thus at risk for selection bias.
- Selection bias may also apply to interviews with stakeholders, the survey responses, and focus groups, as these were people who indicated that they had an interest in being contacted.
- Many other issues arose in the responses to the survey, including concerns with cost, professionalism and other topics which do not concern EDI. The Committee did not follow up with respondents to the survey who were not interested in EDI concerns. To fulfill its mandate as closely as possible, the Committee concentrated on respondents to the survey who expressed concerns with discrimination in the GTHL.
- Surveys went out to a distribution list which included GTHL alumni, parents, team officials and other stakeholders. There were parents and players,

formerly of the GTHL, who opted to not participate in the process. The Committee decided to not engage individuals who were not on this distribution list, in the interest of conserving resources, and for fear of inserting further selection bias into the sample. In follow up reports, the GTHL may choose to investigate this issue, and directly address those who have left the GTHL.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

When the Committee embarked upon this journey, it did not know what the outcome would be. With the skillset, experience, and knowledge of the group, however, the Committee was confident that whatever came of its work would ultimately prove to be of value to the GTHL.

As the process unfolded, the Committee was surprised at what it found in certain areas and less so, in others. Discrimination in hockey was not a new or foreign concept to the Committee but, the level of impact within the organization, was. The amount of work that will be required to turn the tide will be significant for the GTHL and those clubs that form part of the league.

Discrimination and racism in hockey is real. The GTHL is not immune from this reality. Unfortunately, there is no magical incantation that can be used to combat discrimination and racism within hockey. The days of "I am sorry" or "we will do better next time" are long gone. It is also worth noting that the work required cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach.

The road to positive change will require much more than has been done in the past. The road to positive change will require a concerted effort of those in leadership positions as well as those who play a supporting role. Moreover, it will require that the GTHL and its Members take an honest introspective look at themselves where they must allow themselves to be vulnerable while being open to criticism and scrutiny.

The Committee is optimistic about the GTHL and what it can do to bring about change. That optimism is founded in the efforts that the organization has demonstrated thus far. Over the last few years, a series of life events, both in and outside of hockey, has caused the GTHL to take a closer look at itself. Media reports relating to the organization, a decline in its registration and the murder of George Floyd has sparked much needed discussion around racism.

The GTHL is fully engaged in these discussions. The GTHL has begun the process and is on the road towards bringing about change. The Transition Game of 2019 and the creation of the Independent Committee are strong indicators reflecting the GTHL's commitment to change.

The Committee has presented several recommendations covering what it believes to be the most pertinent areas that need to be addressed by the GTHL. Some of these recommendations are not novel. They are based in common sense and practicality. They reflect the thoughts and ideas of a strong collective and more importantly what needs to be done. The recommendations should not only be viewed as a series of actions that need to be taken, but rather in full consideration of a mindset that is required to bring about change.

The implementation of one or two of the recommendations will not be enough. It will require a true commitment to change by the GTHL and its clubs. It will require consistency and continuity over time. Some of these changes, notably, will be small, large, and radical. The Committee anticipates the GTHL and those reading this report may, at first blush, believe that implementing the recommendations will be a daunting task. If that is the view, one should be mindful that nothing of value comes easy or without hard work. The Committee believes that everyone has a role to play. That everyone is part of the solution.

Change will be slow. It is a process, that cannot be rushed; the Committee believes that if everyone recognizes their own agency in working collaboratively towards

combatting racism and discrimination, the GTHL can and will succeed in making hockey a more welcoming place for all. By embracing higher expectations, being open to changes and collaboration in the greater social and business community, the GTHL can produce extraordinary results, both on and off the ice.

This belief is grounded in the reality that the GTHL operates in one of the most diverse cities in the world. The face of hockey is changing both figuratively and literally. The GTHL needs to change with it if the organization intends to survive and thrive in this ever-changing landscape. The GTHL is at a crossroads where it can either maintain its current role as the governing body of youth hockey within the GTA or it can become a world leading sports organization by actively taking steps to make its governance and activities reflect the population it serves.

The GTHL is well equipped and has the capacity to be a leader in this area. By following through on the proposed recommendations, aligning itself with like-minded organizations and following through on its commitment to change, the Committee is confident that the GTHL will secure its position as the vanguard in the work around EDI.

The Committee enjoyed working on behalf of the GTHL. Although gathering the information and putting it together took some time, it was time well spent. The Committee is grateful for the opportunity of working with all of those who assisted in the findings and provided the support needed to complete this valuable work.



## CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee submitted recommendations to the GTHL's Board of Directors in April 2021 for an interim report on Governance. The intention was to assist the league's strategic plan. The following recommendations that have asterisks have been accepted and incorporated into the GTHL's governance model. The Committee wishes to remind the GTHL that the previously adopted recommendations will need to be formally ratified into the existing By-laws and Rules to achieve the desired outcome.

Following its review of the GTHL, the Committee created a series of recommendations that would in its view address the concerns that were identified throughout its gathering of information. The recommendations should be considered by the GTHL and implemented.

To assist the reader in understanding why the recommendation is integral to the development of the GTHL's work around EDI, the Committee has included the rationale around the recommendations.

### **The Committee strongly recommends that the GTHL:**

#### Structure & Organization

##### **1. Hires a qualified staff member experienced in EDI initiatives.**

The work surrounding EDI requires consistency if the organization wishes to be successful. The GTHL should hire a qualified full-time staff member experienced in EDI initiatives to ensure that EDI is woven into the fabric of every decision within the organization. The EDI staff member should work closely with the organization's COO, while connecting to all relevant aspects (internal and external) of the GTHL. This includes but is not limited to organizing and implementing programs that target historically underserved communities, communications and marketing, and governance.

##### **2. Utilizes a scorecard as a measurement tool and ensures that the criteria are adhered to.**

There were concerns expressed that the GTHL, although responsive to issues of racism and discrimination, may not continue its efforts in the long-term. The Board must consistently hold itself accountable by evaluating its makeup, to ensure the league remains a safe place to play hockey. An annual evaluation would ensure that there is a commitment to EDI and ensure that the organization is reaching its full potential by consistently evaluating its operating methods. This applies to Board evaluation, director self-evaluation and stakeholder pulse surveys. Broader stakeholders should also be surveyed

to ensure the impact of EDI changes are measured, tracked, and held into account.

**3. Forms a Diversity Committee.**

Through its research the Committee found that having a diverse Board of Directors leads to a better performing board. This can and should be expanded to the larger organization. The formation and implementation of a Diversity Committee would ensure that diversity of thought is woven into every decision within the league while liaising with the EDI staff member.

**4. Ensures financial transparency – directs each club and team to provide transparency in costs (including sources and amounts of revenues and expenditures).**

One of the most significant complaints that arose within the Committee's investigation was the frustration, real or perceived, regarding the inflated costs of playing hockey. Cost is a huge barrier to EDI as it eliminates opportunities based upon socio-economic status. The Committee recommends that the GTHL ensure financial transparency for all Member clubs and organizations to ensure that individuals looking to play are informed as to where and how their team fees are being spent. This will ensure that participants are engaged in the process of choosing the program that is right for them, while holding Members accountable for minimizing expenses.

**5. Develops and implements strategies to measure the success of EDI programs.**

There is no finish line for EDI. It is an ongoing, consistent, and intentional way of operating. The GTHL should put in place tools for measuring their EDI programs. This may include sending surveys to the GTHL's stakeholders every two years to receive feedback as to the programs offered, their effectiveness in changing behaviours, and creating a respectful, inclusive environment. Ultimately, what gets measured, gets done.

## Governance

**6. \* Mandates that a minimum of 30% of BIPOC individuals be elected to the Board of Directors.**

After examining the By-laws, external organizations and interviews, the Committee identified a need for a diverse board. Similar to the rationale behind the implementation of a Diversity Committee, the adoption of this recommendation will ensure that there is diversity of thought. A diverse Board of Directors is widely associated with better performing boards and provides a greater scope of decision-making perspectives. This approach should be a

long-term goal, achievable within the next four years. This recommendation should also apply to GTHL Members.

**7. Mandates that a minimum of 40% of female individuals be elected to the Board of Directors.**

After examining the By-laws, external organizations and interviews, the Committee identified a need for a diverse board. Thus, this recommendation should also apply to GTHL Members. The GTHL must ensure meaningful female representation on the Board of Directors. Best practice suggests a board should not have more than 60% of one gender. This approach should be a long-term goal, achievable within the next four years.

**8. Mandates that the Nominations Committee works to its full potential leading into the AGM.**

The Committee's review of the organization's Rules and By-laws identified that there was an existing Nominations Committee in place. Prior to 2021, the Nominations Committee was not being utilized to its potential. In April 2021, the Committee recommended amendments to the Nominations Committee, among other changes. The implementation of this recommendation by the GTHL ensured that the organization now utilizes the existing structure to its full potential.

**9. Mandates that the Nominations Committee be educated about EDI and intersectionality.**

The Committee, in its review of the organization, found that a change in mindset as it relates to EDI was necessary. Given the role that the Nominations Committee fulfills, it makes sense that the GTHL should educate their Nominations Committee on the advantages of intersectionality to have a more holistic and in-depth understanding of the benefits of EDI. Every individual can contribute to diversity in thought through their own lived experience.

**10. \* Mandates that the list of nominees include BIPOC individuals.**

The Committee found that the composition of the Board is vital to the organization's success. A diverse board benefits from a multitude of differing perspectives. To ensure that the GTHL has a minimum of 30% BIPOC individuals elected to the Board of Directors leading to a diversity of thought, nominees that are brought forward should include BIPOC individuals.

**11. \* Mandates that the list of nominees includes individuals who identify as female.**

For similar reasons referred to in the previous recommendation, the implementation of this recommendation will help ensure that the GTHL has a minimum of 40% female individuals elected to the Board of Directors. To ensure diversity of thought, nominees that are brought forward should include females. There should also be consideration made for representation of people with disabilities and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

- 12. Mandates that the Nominations Committee proactively communicates with the GTHL's stakeholders (clubs, divisions, teams) to highlight and introduce the future Board electees no later than a month prior to the league's AGM.**

To alleviate the disconnect that is experienced by stakeholders and to facilitate a more engaged voting process at the AGM, the Nominations Committee must proactively communicate with stakeholders. This will lead to informed voting while engaging the community in the league's governance makeup. This recommendation stemmed from the governance chapter, which the GTHL Board implemented in Spring 2021. The Committee has kept this specific recommendation in the final report, to allow other clubs and organizations to adopt a similar approach. It is strongly recommended that they do so.

- 13. Strongly recommends that Members include BIPOC and female representation requirements in their By-laws and Club Policies, over the course of two years.**

The current By-laws and structure of Member organizations do not require any representation of BIPOC or female Board Members, officers, employees, or team officials. In keeping with the changes at the GTHL Board, mandating inclusion for BIPOC and female Members would (i) increase diversity of thought, (ii) cause Member organizations to reflect current and prospective participants, and (iii) increase the pool of candidates or nominees that the Nominations Committee could draw from. Changes in the GTHL must be driven from the top-down and the bottom-up.

- 14. Mandates that of the BIPOC individuals elected to the Board, at least one occupies a Vice President position within three years of the release of this report.**

The information received by the Committee demonstrated that there is a concern that there is not enough BIPOC representation in the GTHL, especially at the highest levels where important decisions are made. For there to be effective governance, there must be a wider breadth of ideas and perspectives. Those ideas must come from a position of influence.

- 15. Mandates that the existing President mentor the BIPOC Vice President.**

Succession planning is integral to the success of this organization. Mentorship encourages stronger leadership within the organization. The implementation of this recommendation would reflect the true commitment to the Vice President's growth within the organization while serving as an example for the clubs and Members that make up the league.

- 16. Mandates that the length of the term of the Vice President be changed to three years.**

The Committee found that the existing approach with respect to the length of terms was similar to other organizations. Given the recommendations that the Committee has made and the time that will be required for the implementation

of the recommendations, the extension of the term from two to three years will permit the Vice President time to learn the role and be effective in fulfilling the role. The time extension, which applies to all Vice Presidents, allows for continuity and effectiveness within the organization.

**17. Mandates that the Nominations Committee proactively recruit future Board electees based upon skill sets that are aligned with the GTHL's strategic plan.**

The GTHL recently created a robust strategic plan that includes a focus on EDI initiatives. The skills of each director are critical to the collective effectiveness of the Board and the success of the organization. When nominating new directors, the Nominations Committee should take into consideration the skills that will best serve the current and future needs of the organization while ensuring that there a diverse group of individuals being nominated.

## Culture & Coaching

**18. Develops and implements more robust, consistent, and structured screening procedures for those interested in coaching.**

The Committee through its review and interviews identified a greater need of enhanced screening of coaches. The GTHL's current screening policy includes measures that are meant to ensure the safety and well-being of its participants. That is a correct approach. The policy does not, however, address the concern that was identified as it relates to racism and discrimination. Given the important role that coaches play as leaders, the GTHL must go above and beyond the screening procedures currently in place to ensure that the individuals that are selected have standard critical thinking skills and the tools to effectively coach and mentor young athletes. This recommendation is applicable to the GTHL Board, Clubs, and organizations.

**19. Ensures that Members are recruiting and appointing BIPOC team officials with diverse skill sets.**

While conducting the interviews, the Committee found that a homogenous group is involved at the coaching level throughout the GTHL. The lack of representation at the coaching and leadership level raised certain concerns about the ability to relate to BIPOC players and/or being sensitive to BIPOC issues, according to the interview findings. To address these concerns, it would serve the GTHL and its Members well to focus their energy on recruiting BIPOC team officials. It should be noted, however, that the skill set required to become a coach should not be ignored.

**20. Creates and implements a BIPOC Coaching Mentorship program.**

As stated above, the Committee found that coaching at all levels within the GTHL is done by a homogenous group. A lack of diversity leads to stagnation and group think. For current BIPOC team officials and/or individuals in coach-like positions within the GTHL, the Committee recommends that the GTHL create a program and/or pathway for BIPOC coaching mentorship.

**21. Recruits, trains, and provides opportunities for women in the GTHL.**

The Committee found through interviews and focus groups that sexism and gender-based discrimination is prevalent in the GTHL. Furthermore, the organization lacks female representation at several key levels. To address these issues, the GTHL should actively recruit, train, and promote women at all levels of the GTHL including coaching. The diversity in thought will help all aspects of the league, and empowering women in hockey helps erode misogyny and discrimination, while creating a more welcoming environment for everyone.

## Disputes & Resolution

**22. Creates an anonymous hotline/ombudsperson's office for people to report discriminatory actions.**

There is a culture of fear around the repercussions of complaining within the GTHL. To avoid the fear of reprisal an anonymous hotline that would allow individuals to file a complaint should be implemented to accept complaints about suspected discrimination. It should be clear that this hotline is specifically intended for incidents relating to discrimination. Complaints should be addressed in a timely manner. The GTHL should engage an ombudsperson to ensure complaints are anonymous and protected without fear of repercussion. On a practical level, should a complainant wish to remain anonymous, the Committee recommends that the complaint proceeds by having the organization stand in the place of the complainant.

**23. Reviews incident reports where racial slurs are alleged to have been used but not heard.**

There was frustration that came from individuals who were called names or were on the receiving end of derogatory comments where no formal action was taken by the official because they did not hear/witness the incident. This recommendation achieves the objective of acknowledging the complaint while ensuring patterns of behaviour are measured and held accountable. If a repeat offender is identified following the review, the offender should be informed and

considered for an education program. This recommendation should apply to the Members as well.

**24. Introduces a transparent reporting system that follows and tracks the number of complaints (for all stakeholders, i.e., for team officials, parents, and athletes).**

Trust in the organization is integral to the inclusion of participants of diverse backgrounds. Through its research, the Committee found that complaints were made about racial slurs from team officials and other players. Through the virtual townhall, the Committee found that when some parents and players complained, the GTHL dealt with the matter internally, but the process and outcome were not always made available to those involved in the incident. Greater transparency is required. Participants should have a mechanism to relay information and be able to inform themselves about incidents. Information about the complaints should be made available to individuals beyond those who are involved in the incident. Names and other sensitive details may be redacted from the reports to protect the privacy of individuals involved.

**25. Implements a zero-tolerance policy regarding discriminatory language and behaviour that applies to everyone (including spectators) to at least the same standard regarding discriminatory language as athletes are held.**

There were concerns that not everyone receives the same treatment for bad behaviour. Discriminatory conduct was dismissed or minimized for some while not for others. A policy that addresses discriminatory conduct is required to help increase trust in the organization while establishing clear boundaries of what is acceptable. We commend the GTHL for instituting changes to their Policies and Rules to ensure that everyone, including team officials, parents, and spectators, are held to the same standards or higher than athletes. Further changes to the policy must adequately address the mindset of the participants to establish that discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable. It must also provide meaningful consequences for the offending conduct.

**26. Creates an Alternative Dispute Resolution ("ADR") process for complaints that is populated by a rotating panel of volunteers who are qualified in ADR.**

A full hearing may not be needed for less contentious complaints. There needs to be a mechanism that provides participants with another option to resolve disputes. The ADR approach will assist in raising trust and confidence in the complaints process. The rotating panel allows for a different perspective when considering the complaint. This process would ensure faster access to solutions for complaints. The ADR would filter serious complaints to a level where they would be dealt with accordingly. Routing cases in this manner would also help

mitigate resources and create a lighter workload for the COO. The ADR process may involve the ombudsperson's office where appropriate.

**27. Introduces sanctions for repeat offenders that go beyond penalties and suspensions.**

A repeat offender is someone who is repeatedly alleged to have used slurs and is disciplined accordingly. For participants who receive penalties but continue to maintain similar conduct, more creative solutions are required. Solutions may include but are not limited to completing education courses and/or being required to participate/lead education sessions. The Committee hopes to implement more impactful sanctions for repeat offenders. The goal is to hold the repeat offender more accountable for their behaviour.

## Education

**28. Re-imagines its approach to education.**

The Committee found that although the GTHL utilizes education modules as part of its training, the current climate requires that the GTHL re-imagine its educational modules regarding EDI. The league can further its relationship with RESPECT in Sport, or partner with a supplementary educational provider that specializes in EDI education. To make EDI part of the fabric of the organization, the content must have an impact and be culturally relevant. The education modules should have global, diverse appeal with representation of the community that the GTHL serves. The approach should include:

- Why EDI is important to success in hockey (and life);
- Current challenges and experiences of racism and discrimination in hockey;
- Key concepts around EDI — where bias comes from and how it is manifested;
- Ways in which individuals can take action to help create a more inclusive game;
- A pledge or call to action.

**29. Creates and executes an educational program for all stakeholders including players, parents, coaches, clubs, referees, Staff and Board, on the shift in culture and initiatives on racism and EDI.**

The information provided during the Committee's review made it clear that the learning coming from the education and training modules was not reaching all stakeholders within the league. The Committee also found that the mandated parental education training required that a parent complete the module without any guarantee that the player would receive the information. Education should be tailored to specific ages and psychological development stages. It should also be tailored to address certain roles and responsibilities (*i.e.*, EDI education for a team official versus EDI education for a Board



Member). Ensuring that this is mandated for every stakeholder within the GTHL will help create accountability and set clear expectations for behaviour. It will also help empower people to report discriminatory behaviour through education. The education and training modules should be accessible and available online.

**30. Implements a mandatory educational peer training session that is delivered by a member of the team to the rest of the team.**

The Committee found that the sharing of information as it relates to education was limited to specific groups within the organization. Education can be more impactful when and where information is shared by peers. In case of the GTHL, players may be more receptive to receiving information from their peers and more comfortable in asking questions. The peer training sessions will provide a medium for education to occur on a consistent basis. It may be used in conjunction with a suspension of a player that would lead the session.

**31. Organizes and implements an EDI speaker series lead by significant GTHL/Hockey Alumni.**

It is often difficult for racialized individuals to identify with those who do not look like, or sound like them. During the Committee's review this theme was present. The sessions led by racialized or minority group members of the hockey community should include players, team officials and other successful alumni with whom the players can relate. The GTHL should utilize its notable alumni to help spread the message of EDI's importance in the game of hockey, and in life. Notable alumni may help bring the messaging to life and make it more tangible. The more extensive the name, the more significant the impact of the message on players and parents. NHL players and alumni are role models, and their message carries a lot of weight.

**32. Implements mandatory EDI training sessions for parent representatives, requiring all stakeholders to engage in a minimum of two sessions with the content over the course of the season.**

Education is not an event but a process of meaningful actions. The Committee found that partaking in education and training modules only once in a season is not enough. This approach led to lack of recall as was described by the interview participants. The mandatory minimum sessions for all stakeholders – limited to one hour per session – will reduce the issue of lack of recall, while creating a stronger mindset around issues of EDI within hockey. A mid-season check-in with modules will aid in consistency of culture and standards. The sessions should take a building-block approach to learning, with subsequent modules adding to the previous module. This will ultimately save time, because clubs will end up with a stronger and more educated team, and potentially fewer incidents to address.

**33. Creates a sub-committee that reviews and measures the current EDI education's impact.**

The Committee found that best practice for EDI education is to create learning experiences (including modules) that are culturally relevant and tailored to its audience. To ensure this, the GTHL should create a sub-committee of dedicated individuals from underrepresented groups (i.e., BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+, people with disabilities and allies) to provide feedback and suggest tools of measurement for program effectiveness. The EDI sub-committee shall work closely with the EDI Officer to ensure dedicated and consistent resources are aiding EDI rollout.

**34. Pairs suspensions with mandatory EDI education modules.**

Through an examination of hundreds of complaints within the GTHL, the Committee found that the rules in place currently are ineffective in changing behaviour. The GTHL should couple discriminatory suspensions with mandatory EDI education opportunities. This offers a learning opportunity from the misconduct and helps keep EDI education in the fabric of the organization. Discipline, coupled with education, has the potential to become a significant route to create effective change. Through education and an improved culture, the Committee would like the GTHL to reach a position where these offences do not happen in the first place.

**35. Mandates the implementation of safe spaces in all facilities or locations for women and non-binary individuals.**

The Committee found that there was a growing concern that the GTHL is not doing enough to ensure safe spaces for individuals who do not identify as male. This concern is not surprising given the current environment that we are living in. The GTHL operates in a community that is not monolithic; therefore, this has been identified as a concern. The GTHL needs to take greater care ensuring that all facilities in which they operate have safe spaces for women and non-binary individuals (i.e., including, but not limited to locker rooms and bathrooms). This helps establish safe space for all individuals and sets a tone of inclusivity.

## Communications & Connections

**36. Creates and implements a strong communications plan to support EDI messaging throughout the league.**

The Committee through its interviews and focus groups found that although the GTHL used various forms of communications to share information, there is work to be done in reaching a greater number of individuals from diverse groups. The GTHL should refresh and enhance its communications plan to ensure it represents the diversity of the population it serves. Communication should not only celebrate EDI stories but provide educational topics that can easily be disseminated via email, the GTHL's website, Break-Out magazine,

and social media platforms. Specifically for social media, the GTHL should consider creating micro-videos that touch upon themes of EDI education (*i.e.*, microaggressions, the by-stander effect, how to be a good ally). This can have a significant impact through consistency, accessibility, and tangibility of lessons. The GTHL should implement communications in official and community languages and meet AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) standards in all communications.

**37. Implements a public relations campaign to improve the outlook towards hockey, and demonstrates positive changes in terms of addressing racism and systemic issues.**

The Committee found through its external analysis that there is a very real concern in the media about hockey culture. The GTHL serves to create a strong public-facing campaign to tackle some of these concerns head-on, whether it be lack of diversity or transparency in governance and communications, through public external communications and relations. This should not be a form of tokenism – the GTHL should ensure all communication featuring BIPOC individuals is meaningful and reflects the true action the GTHL has taken towards inclusivity and diversity. This approach will keep the GTHL accountable with their EDI plans and help to introduce new people and faces to the community.

**38. Creates a league-wide event that engages all stakeholders prior to the commencement of the competitive season.**

The Committee found that there were conflicting understandings of the GTHL culture, and a disconnect with GTHL governance and leadership with the league's stakeholders. The Committee also notes that community engagement is imperative for successful EDI adoption. Hosting a "[Hockey Weekend](#)" to kick off the competitive season can help alleviate this disconnect while simultaneously engaging the community. It affords the GTHL leadership and governance the opportunity to set the tone for the season, providing educational opportunities through speakers, while clearly setting intentions and expectations for behaviour throughout the season.

**39. Creates an award that recognizes the contributions made by a player, coach, and a team in promoting EDI values.**

The Committee found that changing behaviours through negative feedback is not always the most efficient way to change hearts and minds. EDI best practices state that continuous dialogue and feedback are necessary to truly be successful in implementing EDI values throughout an organization. Providing positive reinforcement to teams and individuals that were upstanding and went beyond what is required of them is a positive way to celebrate the good work that many GTHL stakeholders are doing. The GTHL celebrates winning on the ice, and must observe exemplary behaviour off the ice, especially behaviour the GTHL values.

**40. Partners and strategizes with external organizations that are currently working with historically marginalized communities in finding financial solutions that will facilitate their participation in hockey.**

The Committee found through its survey that socio-economic disparities were likely to impact accessibility to the sport and magnify ethno-racial differences in who gets admitted to the league and gets opportunities to advance in the game of hockey. Stakeholders were concerned about the increasing costs of hockey, specifically for individuals of historically marginalized communities, as a barrier to the growth and makeup of the GTHL. The GTHL should foster relationships with external organizations that provide financial assistance or bursary opportunities, catered to these communities' needs. Specifically, the GTHL should partner with organizations that focus on increasing opportunities for women, BIPOC individuals, those with disabilities, and those in underserved communities in the GTA.

**41. Hosts an annual town hall regarding EDI.**

The Committee found that stakeholders appreciated the opportunity to be heard during the GTHL town hall that laid the foundation for the Committee's work. It was a significant opportunity for the Committee to gather information to assist in the drafting of this report. There is a benefit that can and will be derived from the stakeholders providing ongoing feedback to the GTHL. The town hall serves as a valuable platform to share information. The GTHL should host an annual town hall regarding EDI to ensure that the community has a chance to be heard, air grievances, and come together in the spirit of finding solutions. The GTHL should ensure that the results of the town hall are communicated broadly, in keeping with EDI learning and awareness.

**42. Creates and implements an EDI Parent Representative Initiative.**

The Committee found that there was a disconnect between GTHL leadership and stakeholders. The Committee also notes that it found best practices in intentional EDI education is to have dedicated resources assigned to consistently disseminate the information. The GTHL should explore novel ways to engage parents in the EDI educational process to alleviate this disconnect and strengthen continuity in communication. The parent representative initiative will help to disseminate important information to the clubs while providing a platform for the EDI officer to receive important feedback. The Committee cautions that this role is separate and distinct from the team manager role that currently exists.

**43. Identifies and strategizes with external organizations that are currently working with historically underrepresented and underserved communities to be introduced to the game of hockey.**

Toronto is the most diverse city in the world, with 51% of its inhabitants having been born outside of Canada. This provides the GTHL an immense opportunity to expand their stakeholder population by introducing the game of hockey to non-traditional groups and newcomers. This is not a new concept, and this Committee suggests a pragmatic approach when reaching out and working with underserved communities. The GTHL does not need to re-invent the wheel but instead focus its energy on widening the inclusion net. Several organizations are already working within communities to introduce the game of hockey. The GTHL should work closely with external organizations to create strategies and synergies to introduce the game and keep athletes within the game of hockey, by reducing barriers to joining a league.

**44. Eliminates ethnic or stereotypical mascots or imagery from teams and clubs.**

The Committee understands that the GTHL is already taking steps to support this initiative and is supportive of this process.

## APPENDIX

### Proposed job description: Chief Equity Diversity Inclusion Officer

The Greater Toronto Hockey League is moving towards leading a major shift in hockey culture of which EDI will be a key component. Youth hockey in Canada including the GTHL is overdue for a shift in its culture which can be a challenge given its long-standing history. This shift is essential, and the timing is now. Initiated by the GTHL through the Transition Game and Independent Committee with full support of the Board, the GTHL sponsors and its participants, the GTHL is seeking a Chief Equity Diversity Inclusion Officer.

Reporting to the COO, the Officer will be an experienced diversity leader accountable for all things EDI. They will develop an organization-wide EDI strategic plan using and expanding the thought leadership, research, and recommendations to date.

Education review, culture review and community outreach will be key to this mandate. This will include working with partners to develop training programs for parents, players, and team officials; reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion efforts; and reviewing all new EDI strategies and approaches.

**Job description:**

- Lead educational components ensuring that they are impactful, up to date, relevant and connecting with the community.
- Develop approaches to create a culture shift within youth hockey.
- Lead communication about all EDI initiatives and public facing messaging.
- Be responsible for outreach and partnerships to attract new faces to the sport of hockey.
- Improve the branding and public facing messaging for the EDI approach within the GTHL.
- Oversee complaints and outcome for rules and regulatory process of EDI within the GTHL.
- Develop a framework to measure results and success of initiatives.

**Qualifications:**

- Post-secondary formal EDI education.
- Experience in change management and building consensus with stakeholders on new initiatives and change would be highly valued. Amazing bridge builder and team builder.
- Experience organizing, communicating, and ensuring that the plans are executed across the organization, navigating the diversity of the GTHL community.
- First rate communications skills that can motivate and influence.
- Proven ability to change culture in an organization and measure that change.
- Experience working with others to create branding and communication that has impact.
- Experience creating safe spaces for volunteers and youth. Experience expanding opportunities for diverse groups of people.
- Experience in sports or knowledge of how sports organizations work.

## GTHL Rule Book, Policies & By-laws

### **Draft Proposals for Change**

#### **1. Mission Statement – Suggested Amendments**

##### **1.1 – The purpose of the League is:**

In addition to the following change that has been made to Clause (d) since the inception of the Committee: [ "to **cultivate** good character, citizenship,

and sportsmanship **in and through** minor hockey.”] that there be the further subclause also be added

(e): “to foster participation to the **cultural demographic of the territory.**

**1. GTHL Board Nominations Process — Suggested Amendments to Article 4 of the GTHL By-law:**

To succeed in meaningful and effective BIPOC representation at the Board level it should start with the Nomination Process and amendments to Article 4 of the GTHL By-law. The Committee acknowledges the existence of the GTHL’s current Nominations Committee mandate. The Committee, however, notes that it may be of benefit to the GTHL to examine and expand upon the current mandate of the Nominations Committee to ensure that it is reaching its full potential, specifically, by:

- a. Establishing a minimum number of nominations required that are greater than the Board positions that are available. This will assist in creating a larger pool of individuals to be considered.
- b. Requiring that nominations include a minimum number from the BIPOC community to represent the cultural demographic of the community.
- c. Ensuring that all nominees, including BIPOC nominees, have the talent and skills that are required and specifically being sought at each election.
- d. Empowering the Nominations Committee of the Board to oversee the above and to promote the nomination process early and regularly:
  - Send communications well in advance to educate potential candidates on process, timing, dates and specify skills and talents being sought.
  - Start at the AGM for next year's AGM with quarterly reminders.
  - Have an education portal for potential candidates available throughout the year on what it means to be a Board Member including commitment level.

**2. Board Representation — Suggested Changes to Section 5.0 of the GTHL By-law:**

- a. Mandate that a minimum of **30%** of the elected directors be from the BIPOC community through the revised Nomination Process which ensures that they have the required skills and talent.
- b. Mandate that in the 2024 election, at least one BIPOC individual must be at the Vice President level.
- c. Expand the categories of ex-officio directors under section 5.06 in a way that would provide the GTHL Board with the power (if needed) to appoint a qualified Board Member after two years to Vice Presidents position.
- d. The Committee strongly recommends that the directorship of all GTHL Members have the same By-law amendments to reflect the GTHL, and its clubs and divisions.

### **3. Diversity Committee — Section 6.02 of the GTHL By-law**

The Board utilizes Section 6.02 to form a Diversity Committee and appoint non-Board Members to that committee, to:

- a. Assist in the Nomination Process.
- b. Provide a direct connection between the Board and BIPOC communities.
- c. Assist in forming appropriate education programs, to inform the GTHL Board.
- d. Assist in identifying areas of opportunity specific to BIPOC communities.

### **Further Governance Proposals related to Zero Tolerance Policy, Filing Grievances and Appointment of an Ombudsperson**

#### **1. Standard of Behaviour Section 13.1 of the GTHL Rule Book and GTHL Policy on Harassment, Abuse, Bullying and Misconduct**

##### **Suggested Amendments to Institute Zero Tolerance Policy**

- a. Institute a Zero Tolerance Policy for racism, discrimination, and mental or physical abuse. This means applying discipline policies and practices that mandate predetermined consequences that are punitive and exclusionary in response to specific types of misbehaviour — regardless of the context or rationale for the behaviour including done in ignorance, by accident, or under [extenuating circumstances](#).
- b. This needs to go beyond the current penalties and suspensions that apply and include some or all of the following concepts:
  - i. Double or triple the game suspensions.
  - ii. Attendance at pre-approved counselling sessions dealing with the offensive behaviour with written approval therefrom, with copies to the team, club and GTHL, that the offender is allowed to return to playing, coaching or as a spectator, regardless of length of suspension. Such counselling to be at the offender's expense with a debrief session upon completion provided by the offender (If a player — then they have to meet with a coach to review what they have learned. If a coach — with the management of club. If a parent — with the team manager or coach or club).
  - iii. Additional financial penalties to the club in each instance for repeat offenders who are club officials or parents.

#### **2. Protests & Appeals — Section 15 of the GTHL Rule Book**

##### **Suggested Amendments to Remove Barriers to Register Grievances**



- a. In cases of a repeat offender give deference to the complainant on the basis of “reasonable suspicion” where the referee does not hear an issue or there are no other witnesses, in cases of a repeat offender.
- b. Provide an option with structured guidelines for multiple complainants to a specific complaint to register a grievance against an individual, a team or a club and vice versa.
- c. Institute a clear policy position with new preventative rules and penalties around “blackballing” and similar reprisal behaviour in response to registering complaints including clear examples of the most common instances. Include a summary of such rules and penalties as part of the opening explanation to the process of registering and responding to a complaint.
- d. Include in the initial process of filing a protest that false grievances will be equally penalized.

**3. Suggested Amendments to Improve the Grievance Process and Ensure Fairness**

- a. Create the role of the GTHL Ombudsperson:
- b. Available to facilitate complaints, explain process and potential outcomes and oversee net effects of bringing complaints.
- c. Independent fairness advisor and overseer to both dissuade frivolous protests and watch over reprisal behaviour (blackballing, reduced playing time, bullying).
- d. Resource for GTHL to resolve disputes without hearings and get colour on complaints on factuality.
- e. Act as unbiased liaison between GTHL, clubs, team officials, and families.
- f. Provide a vehicle to test all parties for ideas on rule changes, new initiatives, etc.
- g. Ombudsperson should be:
- h. Selected by the GTHL Board and approved by vote at AGM.
- i. Be well informed on rules and process of the GTHL.
- j. Be of a character that would garner respect at a broad level among the GTHL constituents for knowledge of the game, and ability to be consistently unbiased and acting in the best interests of the stated values of the GTHL.
- k. Needs to have a certain degree of power to ensure access to constituents as needed and their requirement to cooperate.
- l. Suggest procuring a dedicated sponsor to cover the costs.

### **Board Scorecard and Toolkits**

How it works: Scorecards are reviewed regularly and as part of a new Board Member's onboarding. The scorecard should be anonymous, not linked to individuals, but could be recorded by an EDI officer to report in aggregate the make-up of the Board. The scorecard ensures measurement and tracking of EDI initiatives.

The first scorecard, shown below in blue, is more critical of the current Board composition. The second scorecard, shown in grey and white, is a basic model for tracking EDI in Member governance.

### **Examples of Scorecards**

Governance competencies	Director A	Director B	Director C	Director D	Director E	Director F	Director G	Director H
Director – medium organisation (10 to 99 employees)								
Director – large organisation (100+ employees)								
Financial literacy								
Strategic thinking/planning from a governance perspective								
Executive performance management – management of the CEO								
Governance related risk management experience								
Compliance focus								
Profile / reputation								
Behavioural competencies	Director A	Director B	Director C	Director D	Director E	Director F	Director G	Director H
Team player/collaborative								
Ability and willingness to challenge and probe								
Common sense and sound judgment								
Integrity and high ethical standards								
Mentoring abilities								
Interpersonal relations								
Listening skills								
Verbal communication skills								
Understanding of effective decision-making processes								
Willingness and ability to devote time and energy to the role								

	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3
Male			
Female			
2SLGBTQIA+			
Indigenous			
Racialized			

Permanent Disability			
<b>Diversity</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	
Does the Board include minimum 30% diverse people?			
Does the organization have diverse leaders with profile externally and internally?			
Is diversity considered when bringing on new Members?			
Do leaders proactively share the importance of diversity and inclusion inside and outside the organization?			
Are there well-developed processes to handle diversity and inclusion complaints?			

*Note. Source: "Final Report — Advancing Gender Equity in Sport," Dr. Wendy Cukier and Dr. Cheri Bradish, Ryerson University's Diversity Institute.* <sup>xxvii</sup>

## Culture

### A. Hockey Weekend: Moving the EDI puck down the ice and across the goal line

A motivational, educational, and useful "EDI Summit" for everyone in the GTHL. Ideally, this will happen before the season starts.

**Details:** A two-hour pseudo-virtual event that will be watched by everyone in the GTHL, including teams and parents. Teams and parents will be encouraged to get together in person for the virtual event. The event is mandatory and will be recorded in case someone cannot join. Participants will receive a certificate and possibly related merchandise (water bottle). This event should be launched near the beginning of the hockey season and include as many stakeholders as possible.

Another event could be held for house league cohorts, both for basic education on hockey and for education surrounding EDI, later in the season.

**Preparation:** Before the weekend, the EDI GTHL approach must be in place including any updated rules, values, and EDI mission statement. Further, the EDI Officer and Parent representatives would ideally be in place.

**Possible guest speakers and agenda — Setting the stage:** The session would be a high energy, motivational session that brings on a combination of informative speakers (GTHL representatives — priorities, expectations, mission) and personal EDI stories with EDI literacy messaging from Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, women and BIPOC athletes. There would also be an opportunity for *fun* learning segments such as comparing a top women player's skills to Crosby.

Depending on the ability to deliver all the messaging in the event, it may be useful to follow the main event with breakout sessions for parents and players. Here are examples of how these may be themed.

**What you think, do, and say matters: Why diversity and inclusion are important in hockey and life.**

Player session — 30 min

- Safety and wellbeing of young people
- Leadership
- If you see or hear something, say, or do something
- The importance of potential

**It is not about making it in hockey, it is about making it in life**

Parent session — 30 min

- Tips for hockey parenting — demonstrating EDI
- What you can do to help your child
- Where you can go for support
- The many benefits of sport - why you are here (coaching, etc.)

**Follow-up:** parent representatives will follow-up with 5–10-minute dressing room EDI discussions, topics provided by EDI Officer

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**B. Parent Representatives: Parents involvement in children's education enables cultural change**

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Through parental involvement, a community-based, on-the-ground delivery system for EDI awareness and education can be created. The parent representatives will be

recruited before the season with the goal of making hockey a diverse and welcoming sport. Taking on this volunteer opportunity will provide participating parents an opportunity to learn and grow along with their child while creating a more inclusive culture in their team.

Parent representatives will be required to meet with the GTHL inclusion officer as needed to obtain the latest education updates and share their experiences. Further, parent representatives will be given bite-size education ideas that they can share with their teams (i.e., short videos, anecdotes, discussion topics) that is relevant to the team's culture and is community building. Parent representatives will then take engagement opportunities and learnings back to their teams.

The benefits of parental involvement are threefold:

- 1) Parents can be involved at the team meeting level to communicate the messages from the GTHL EDI education programs;
- 2) Parents will learn the EDI framework giving them the opportunity to engage with their child on EDI topics; and
- 3) Children will follow the parental lead.

## Education Strategy

Develop a comprehensive updated strategy with intentional EDI education to reach all parts of the organization. Focus on parents and players modules first with a strong *why* — why EDI is important in hockey and in life.

Working with the [Ryerson Diversity Institute](#), the following proposal, which includes a suggested budget, was developed to enhance EDI education across the organization. The Committee recognizes that the EDI field is robust and competitive, and the GTHL has numerous options when collaborating with EDI-specific education vendors. The following is one option and is presented as a reference for budget and planning purposes. It is important to note that there may be opportunities for funding through various government programs and corporations.

This quote is presented by [Diversity Institute](#).

*About: The Diversity Institute (DI) [www.ryerson.ca/diversity](http://www.ryerson.ca/diversity) has undertaken numerous evidence informed policy innovation and change management initiatives in organizations across sectors for over 20 years. The work has covered diverse sectors including sports and culture (Sport4Life, Alpine Canada, Rowing Canada, Baseball Canada), financial*

*services, retail, and healthcare. It has led numerous projects looking at barriers to inclusion for women, racialized and Black communities, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples and the LGBTQ2S community and recently launched the internationally recognized micropedia video series aimed at combatting microaggressions with Zulu Alpha Kilo.*

### **Diversity Institute Proposal — submitted by Dr. Wendy Cukier**

An effective diversity and inclusion strategy starts at the top — leadership and a comprehensive strategy which community the commitment to diversity and inclusion, appropriate human resources policies and processes, targets and accountability, cultural change, business processes and programs, outreach, and community engagement.

Examples of modules needed:

**Staff** — a staff training program would normally address the reasons why diversity and inclusion are important to the sector, basic concepts, problems of bias and discrimination and how they become embedded in organizations. Strategies for driving change at the organizational level and choices individuals can make to help build inclusive organizations.

**Team officials** — a program targeting team officials could use some of the same elements with additional focus on how to address and respond to bias and discrimination as well as legal and organizational expectations, policies, and responsibilities.

**Parents and players** — in some ways, this is the most challenging segment to address given the need to meet the needs of diverse audiences, to find a “hook” to engage them, the need for high production values and large-scale deployment coupled with the need to provide sufficient information to help promote changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Ideally the training would be part of a more comprehensive campaign with clear targets and measurable outcomes to drive change. More research and data are required to better understand the audience and tactics that would be effective. In addition, more information about the intended use and distribution of the training (voluntary or mandatory? Free or paid? Information or credentialed?) In the absence of this research, we are proposing an approach based on reviewing comparable programs (e.g., RESPECT from the Ontario Hockey Association) as well as some key informant interviews.

We believe that if this is done well, it could be licensed to other organizations. To support this strategy, Ryerson Diversity Institute could be hired to work with partners to develop and implement training programs and online modules targeted at specific audiences.

**Exploring parents and players module:** We propose that a series of modules totaling 60 -90 minutes which are self-paced and accompanied by assessment and a

certificate would be a possible approach. It might make sense to test different approaches.

Example – We propose to:

- Develop a modular training program combining video, text and “light animation that addresses 1) why diversity and inclusion is important to success in hockey and life, 2) current challenges and experiences of racism and discrimination in hockey and their effects on kids, on families and on the sport, 3) key concepts around diversity and inclusion — where bias comes from and how it is manifest, 4) ways in which individuals can take action to help create a more inclusive game and 5) a pledge or call to action
- We would use allies as opinion leaders — hockey players, team officials, scouts to reinforce why it is critical to success as well as women and diverse players telling their stories (this requires some thought about messengers as well as messages as well as who is available)
- While the Diversity Institute could create and produce the content with its resources at a modest cost (under 50k), we believe that to achieve the results hoped for, an investment in higher production values would be worthwhile.
- The program would include producing 5x video episodes/modules (each approximately 1 minute in length) as part of a diversity training platform.
- Each episode will be prefaced by a relevant sports personality highlighting issues around diversity in hockey, complemented by dynamic motion graphics to help bring the educational content to life.

Example – [Costs](#) (source hyperlinked)

ROLE	TOTAL	NOTES
<b>DIVERSITY INSTITUTE COSTS – RESEARCH, DESIGN, DELIVERY</b>	\$25,000	DI will research and develop a strategy for parents and players.  The Diversity Institute will draft the curriculum and test key messaging for a 60–90-minute program for parents and players  The Diversity Institute will provide 3-4 webinars for staff and team officials
<b>LIVE-ACTION FILMING</b>	\$27,274	Zulubot (video vendor) would group personalities into a single shoot day and can have lighting and elevated production values.



<b>OFFLINE EDITORIAL + MOTION GRAPHICS</b>	\$27,948	3x edit days per 1x min episode. Cutting the personality vignette and adding motion graphics. 2x rounds of consolidated feedback from client. Start with 1x as style guide before cutting the remaining 4x.
<b>ONLINE + COLOUR</b>	\$7,170	Online and colour with an in-house team (keeping costs low)
<b>AUDIO + MUSIC</b>	\$7,608	Audio mix with an in-house team (keeping costs low) and simple stock music.
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$95k	With an additional budget we could enhance production values to the shoot component, think about more bespoke music and incorporate stock footage.

#### GTHL Media Response

The GTHL responded during this time by changing policy and implementing the publishing of gross misconducts. Prior to this, the GTHL did not disclose how often racist and discriminatory incidents occurred, stating they were afraid of damaging the reputation of most young players who show good sportsmanship. Following this change, the league agreed to release aggregated data disclosing details of player penalties for the past three seasons for discriminatory slurs<sup>xxviii</sup>.

#### Table 4

*Data for comments that resulted in penalties being assessed during the past three seasons*

Season	Race	Religion	Sexual Orientation	Gender	Disability	Total	Reported Incidents not Heard by Referee
2019-20	5	1	16	172	3	197	11
2018-19	9	0	36	1	5	51	8
2017-18	6	1	36	4	2	49	10

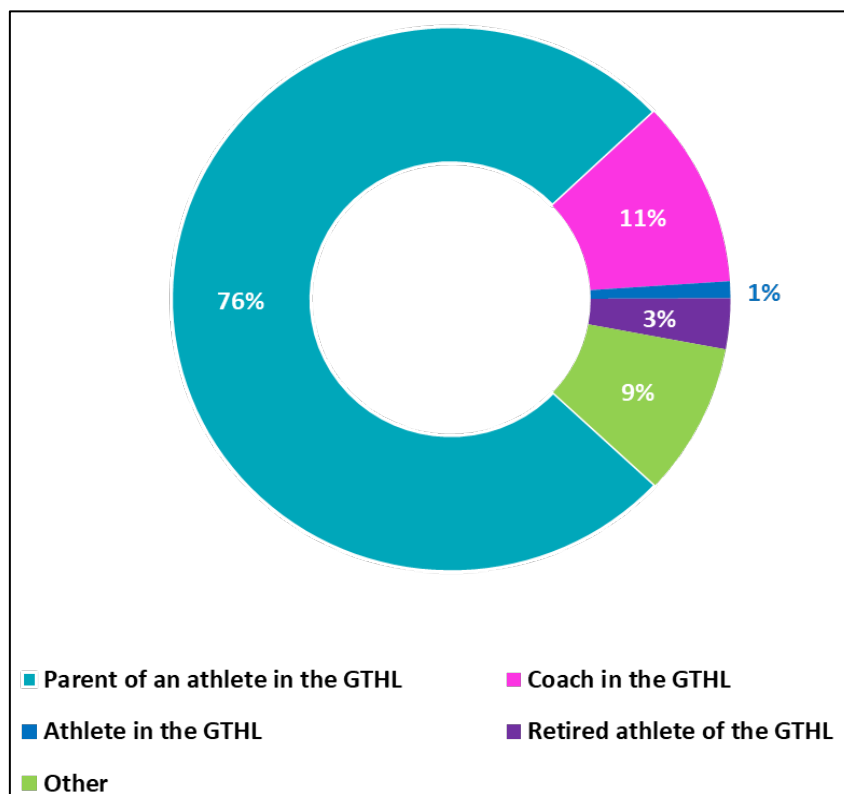
*Note.* The data are from *GTHL Measures to Examine Discrimination in Minor Hockey*, by GTHL Canada, 2020, [www.gthlcanada.com/article/gthl-measures-to-examine-discrimination-in-minor-hockey](http://www.gthlcanada.com/article/gthl-measures-to-examine-discrimination-in-minor-hockey).

The GTHL further stated its commitment to work on its equity, diversity, and inclusion aspects to make hockey a more welcoming place for all, by expanding on various actions, including forming the Committee authoring this report<sup>xxix</sup>. GTHL leadership has publicly expressed that it wants to evolve into a more inclusive place for everyone in the GTA, including a GTHL director stating “we [the GTHL] need to be better. We know we need to do more.

## Survey Figures

**Figure 1**

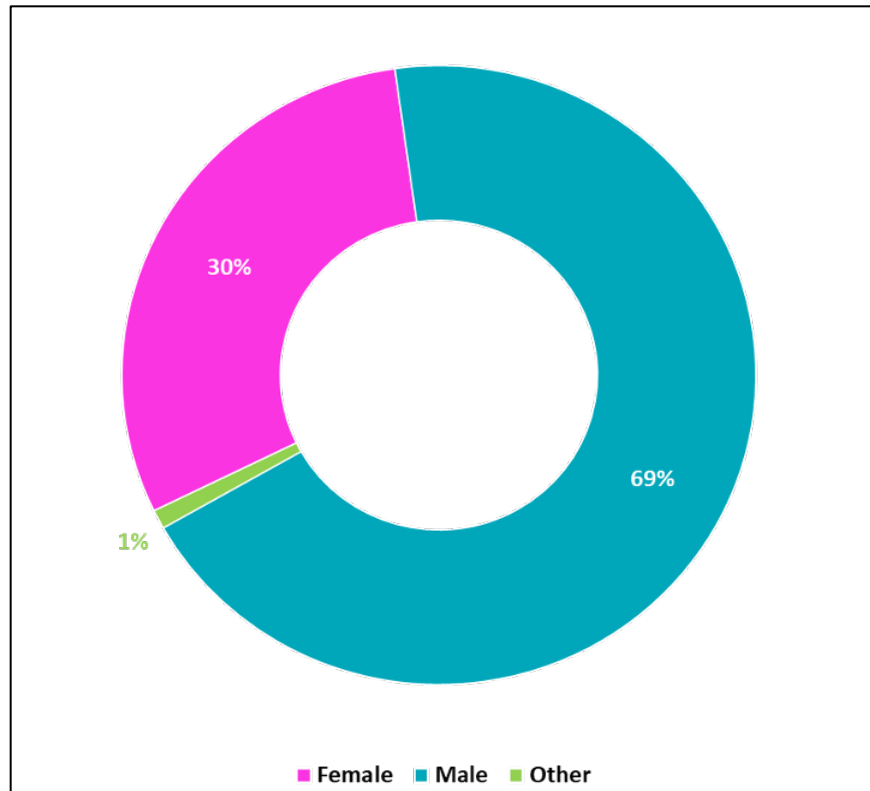
*Participant's role*



*Note.* The survey respondents were primarily parents of current athletes in the GTHL, team officials, and others. The 'others' group include officials such as referees and people with multiple roles, such as parents who were also team officials.

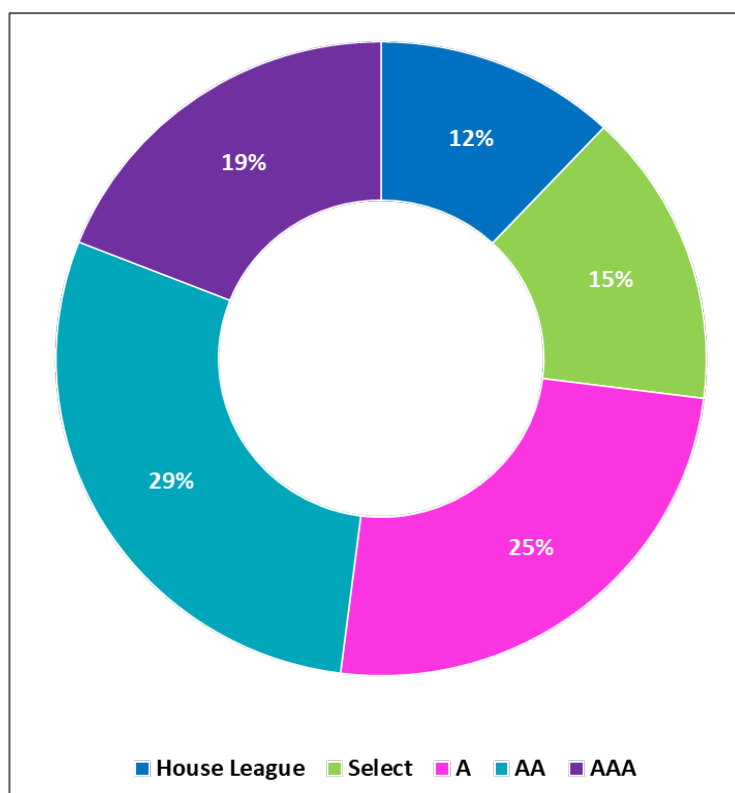
**Figure 2**

*Participant's gender*



**Figure 3**

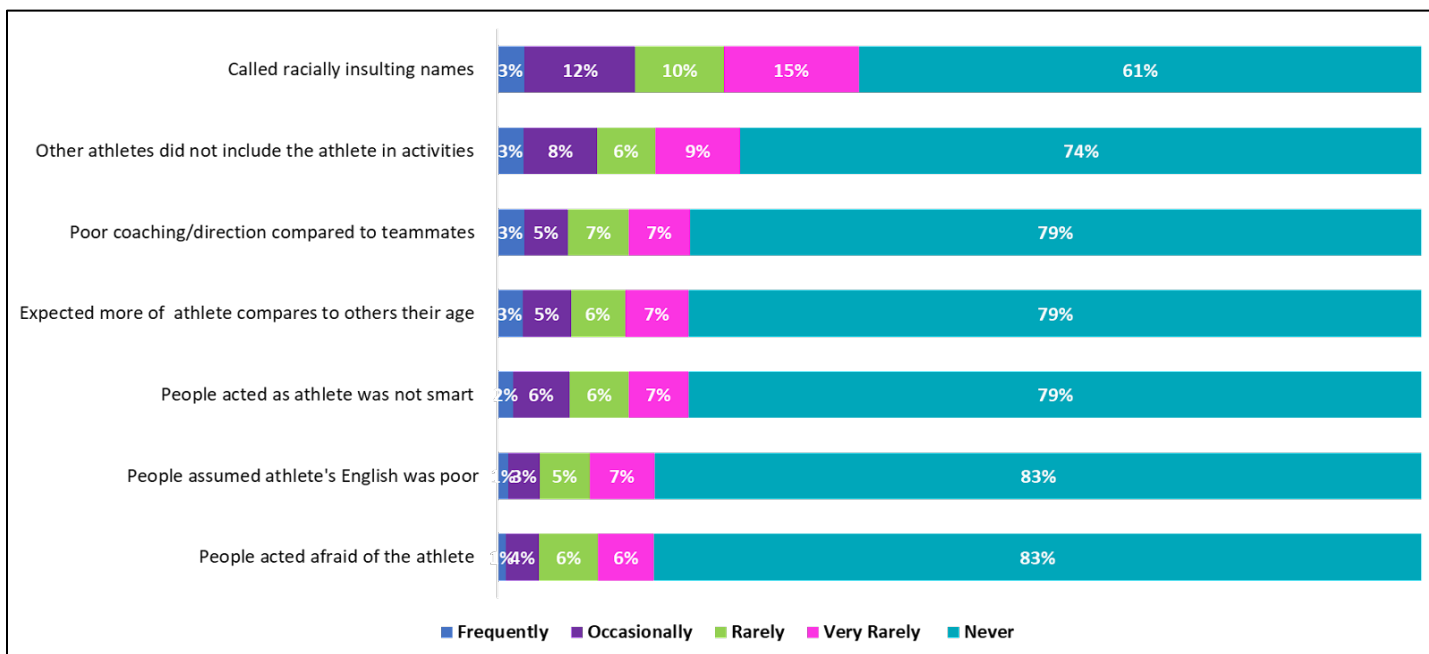
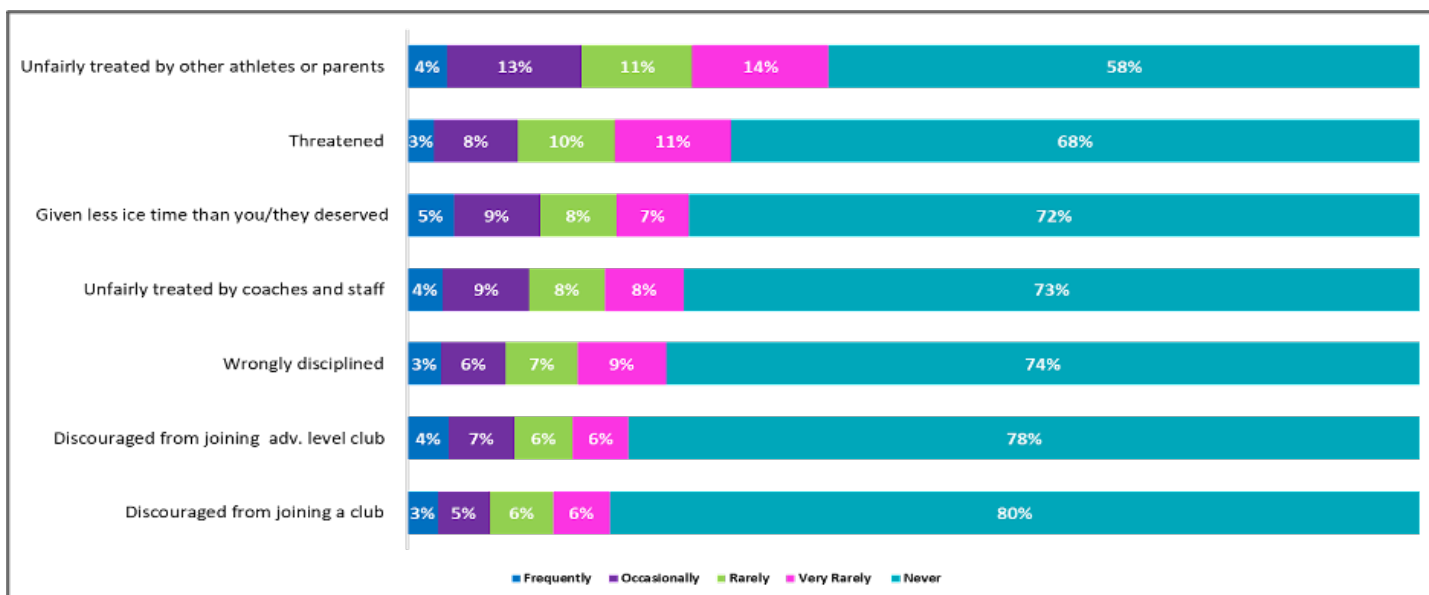
*Level of engagement with the GTHL*



*Note.* Participants represented mostly AA, A, and AAA levels, followed by 'select' and 'house league'. Almost 25% of the participants identified as a visible minority; however, most did not identify as belonging to any of the listed equity-seeking groups. In addition, while about 2% identified as persons with disabilities, less than 1% identified as Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, or belonged to multiple of these groups.

**Figure 5 & 6**

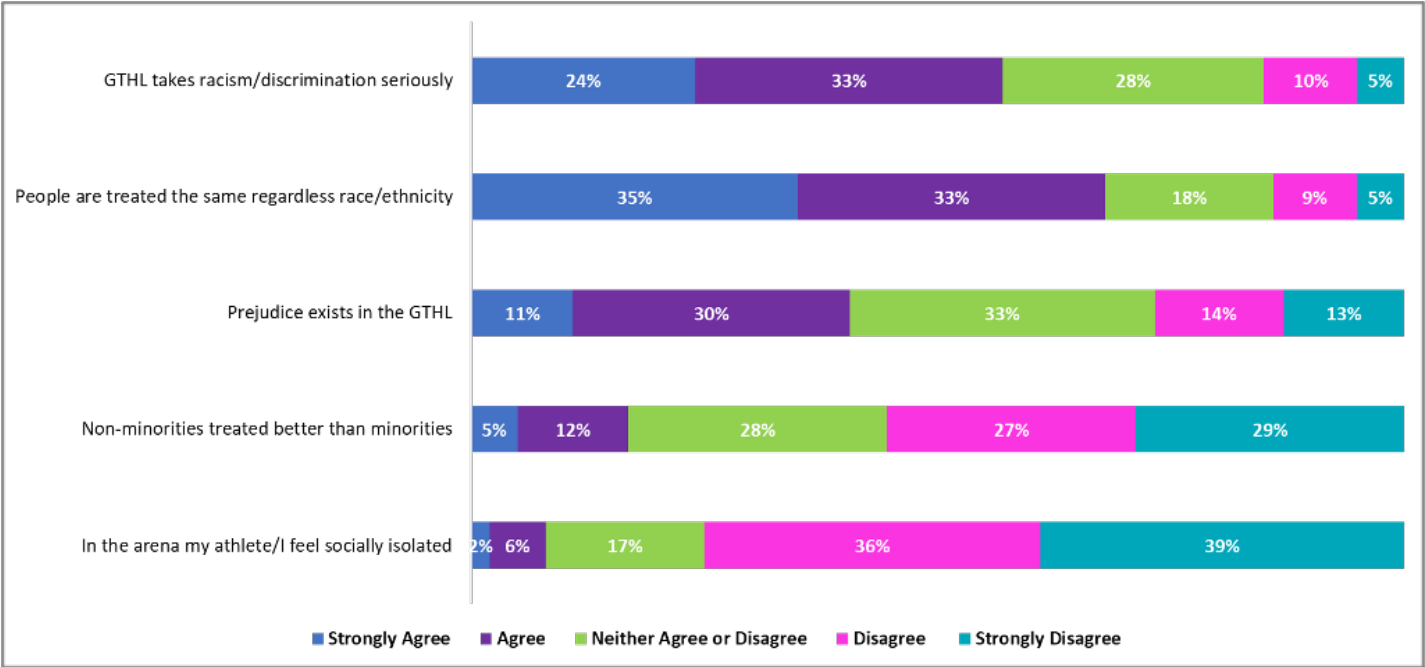
*Threats, discouragement, or unfair treatment in the GTHL*



*Note.* Participants identified the frequency of occurrence of each of the following when racial-ethnic or disability discrimination was at least partly responsible for the experience. As shown in figure 5 and 6 above, most participants (more than 80%) said they were never, very rarely, or rarely threatened,

discouraged, excluded, or unfairly treated by team officials and staff. 17% percent of respondents said they were frequently or occasionally treated unfairly by other athletes or parents, and 15% said they were called racially insulting names.

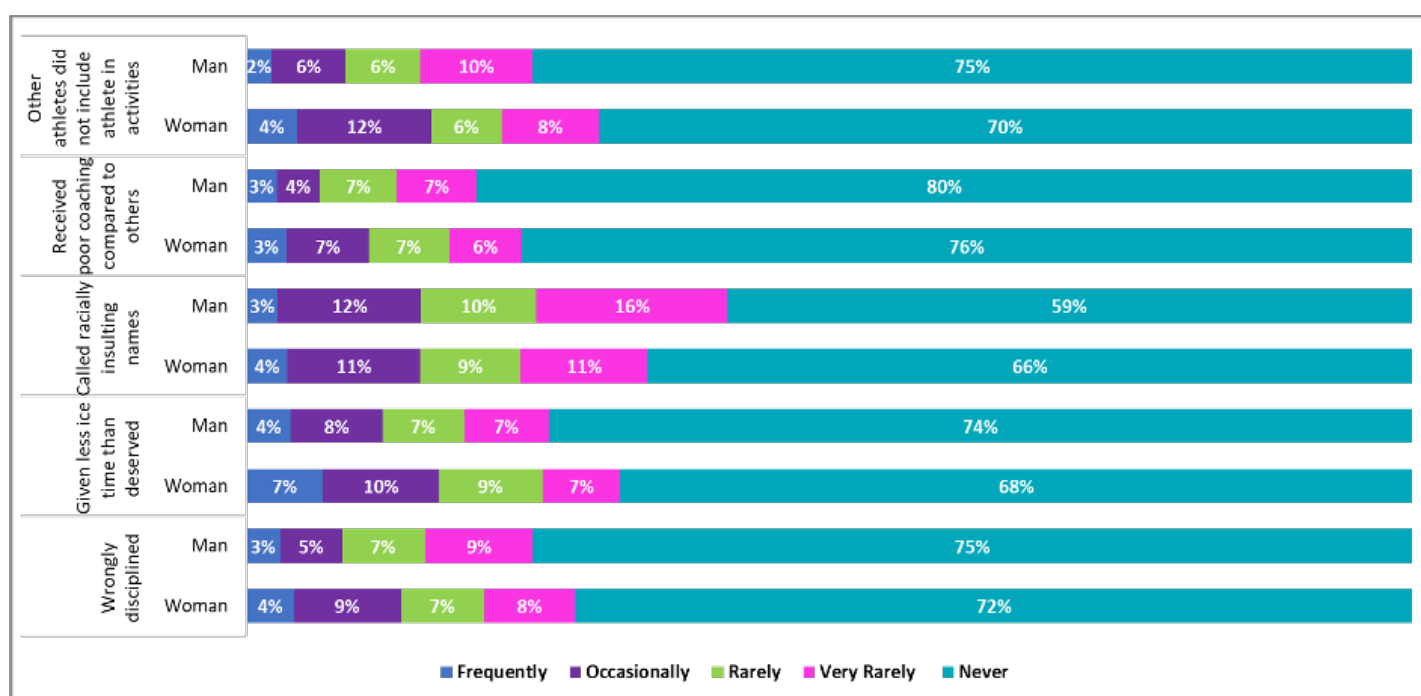
**Figure 8**  
*Racism prejudice and treatment of minorities in the GTHL*



*Note.* Nearly 60% agreed/strongly agreed that GTHL takes issues of racism and discrimination seriously. 41% of the sample agreed/strongly agreed prejudices exist in the GTHL however, almost 70% also agreed/strongly agreed people are treated the same regardless of the race or ethnic identity. Furthermore, most did not feel they were socially isolated (75%) or that non-minorities are treated better than minorities (56%). 17% of respondents perceived that non-minority players are treated better than minorities.

**Figure 21**

*Opportunities and barriers by gender*

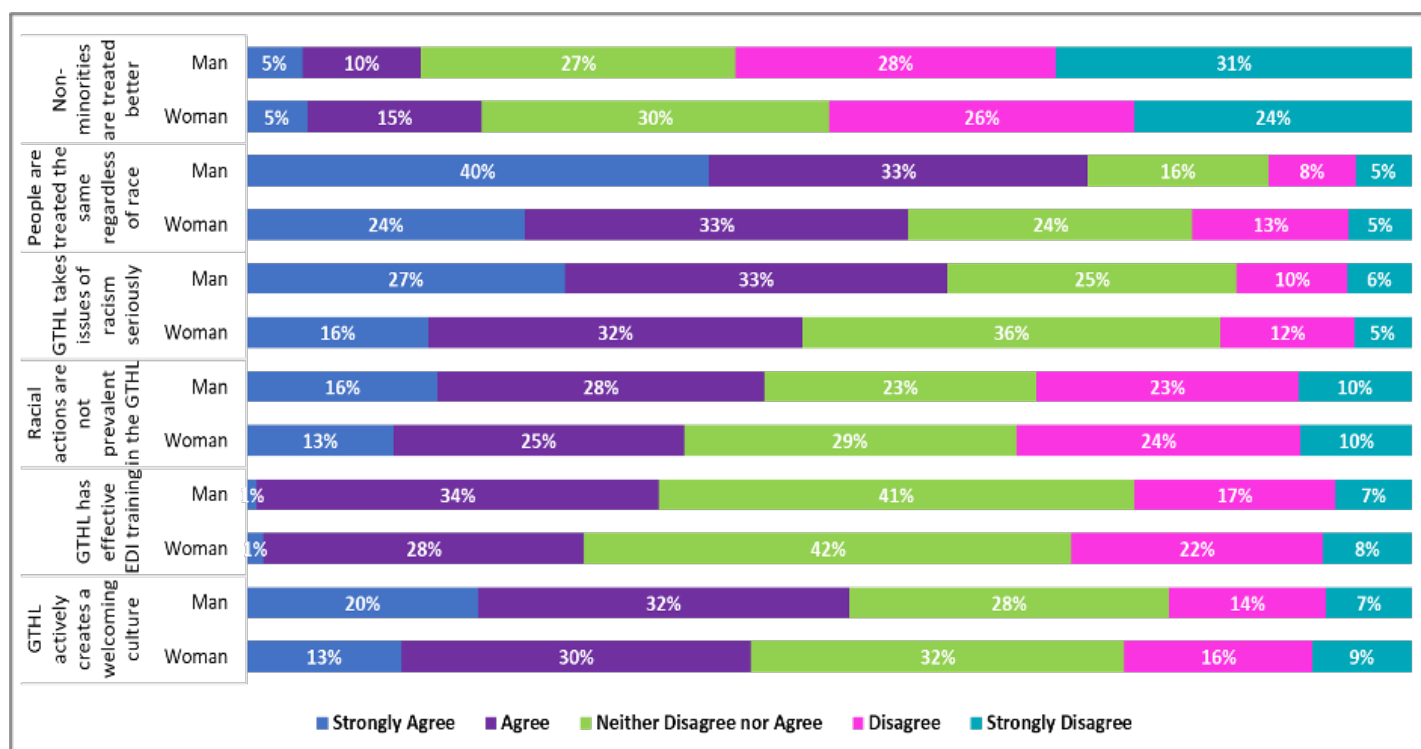


*Note.* Overall, the majority of both women and men said they were very rarely or never wrongly disciplined, given less time on the ice, called racially insulting names, or received poor support from team officials or other athletes. However, the proportion of women that said they were frequently or occasionally disciplined wrongly (13%) or given less time on the ice (17%) were higher than the proportions of men who said the same (8% and 12%, respectively). Equal proportions of women and men (15% each) said they were frequently or occasionally called racially insulting names.



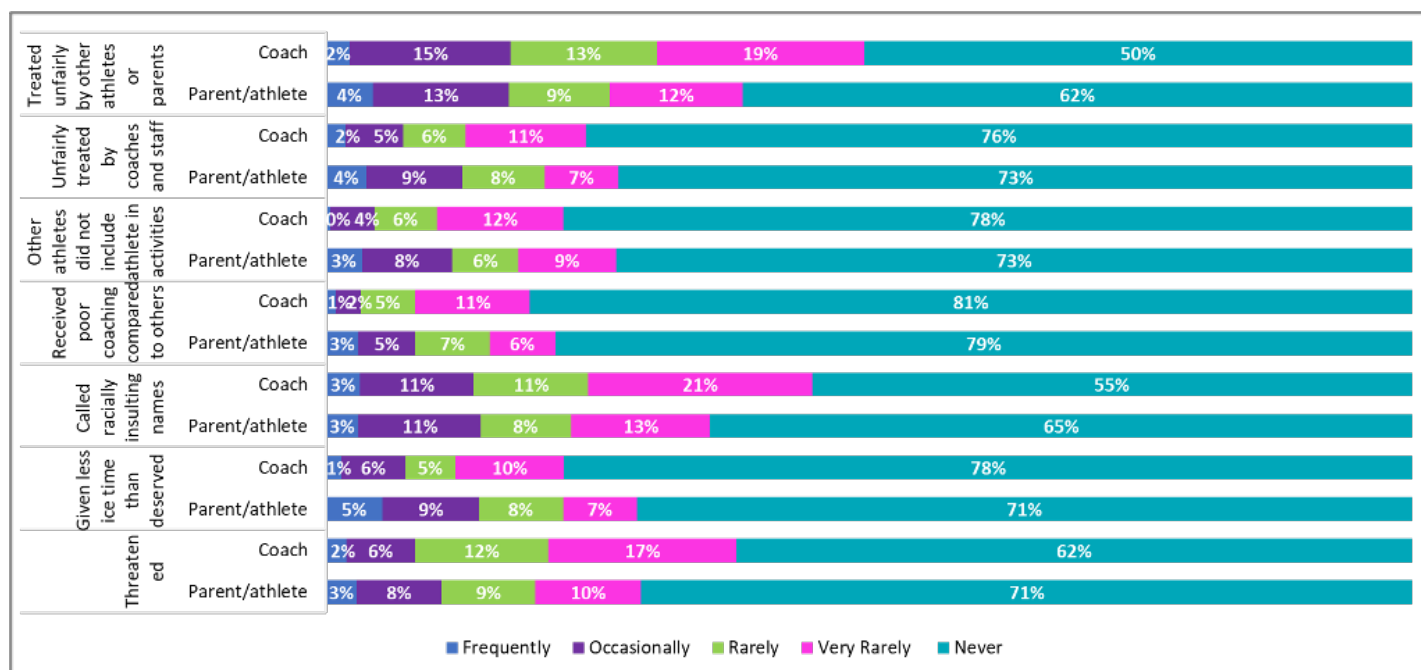
**Figure 22**

*Culture, EDI policies and racism by gender*



*Note.* Most participants (Figure 22), both women and men, agreed/strongly agreed that people are treated equally regardless of their race in the GTHL and that the league takes issues of racism seriously; however, the proportion of men agreeing with these statements were higher than the proportion of women. More women than men disagreed/strongly disagreed that there is a welcoming culture and effective EDI training programs. Almost equal proportions (about 25%) of women and men disagreed that racial action/slurs are not prevalent in the league; however, more men than women agreed/strongly agreed that racial discrimination is not prevalent in the GTHL.

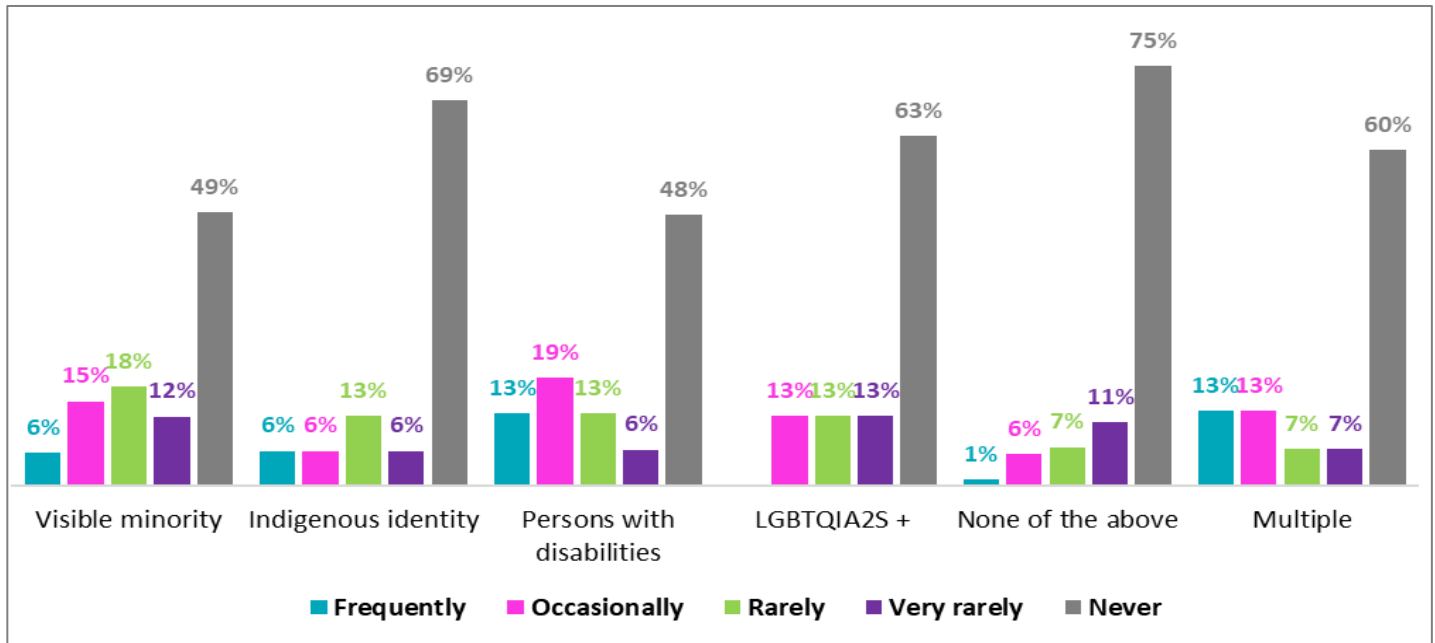
**Figure 25**  
*Opportunities and barriers to participation, responses by role*



*Note.* The majority of parents/athletes and team officials said they never or very rarely encountered discriminatory behaviours, including threats, racial insults, exclusion, or unfair treatments. Although more parents/athletes than team officials said they were unfairly treated by team officials and staff frequently or occasionally (13% compared to 7%), about equal proportions of them said they were called racially insulting names (14% each) and treated unfairly by other parents or athletes (17%).

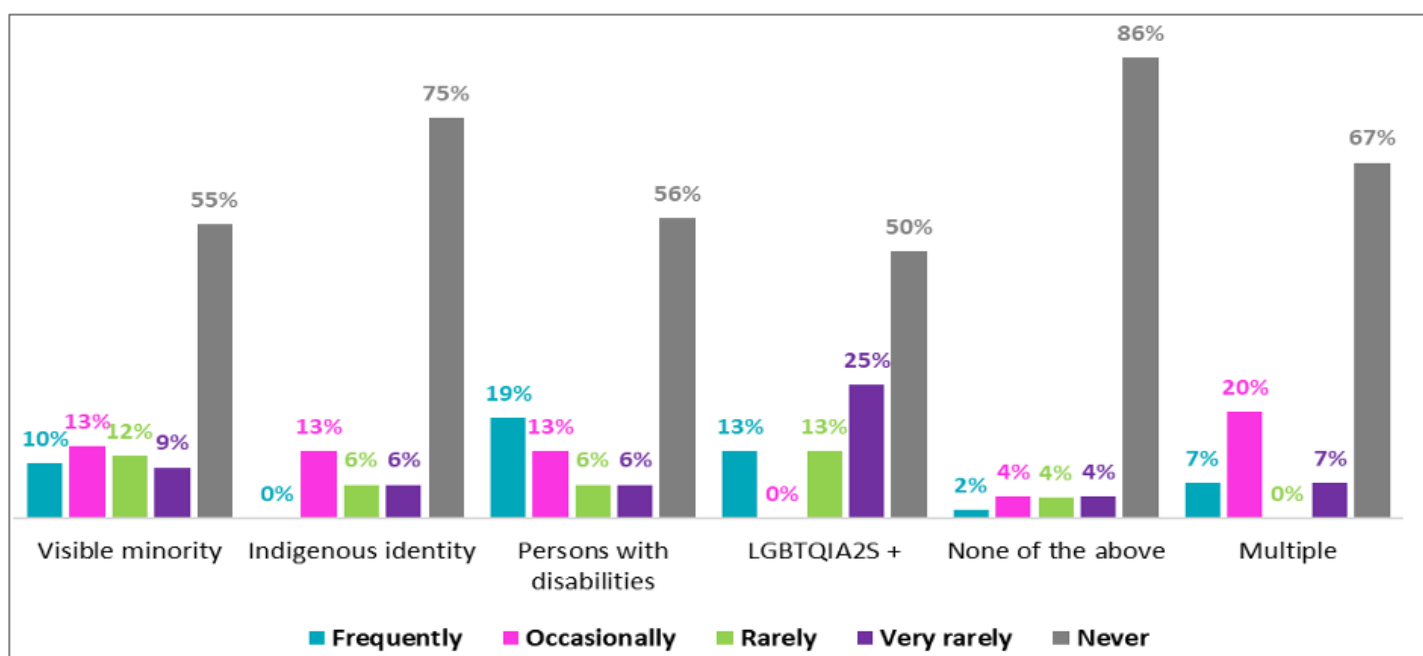
**Figure 29**

*Feel Threatened*



**Figure 30**

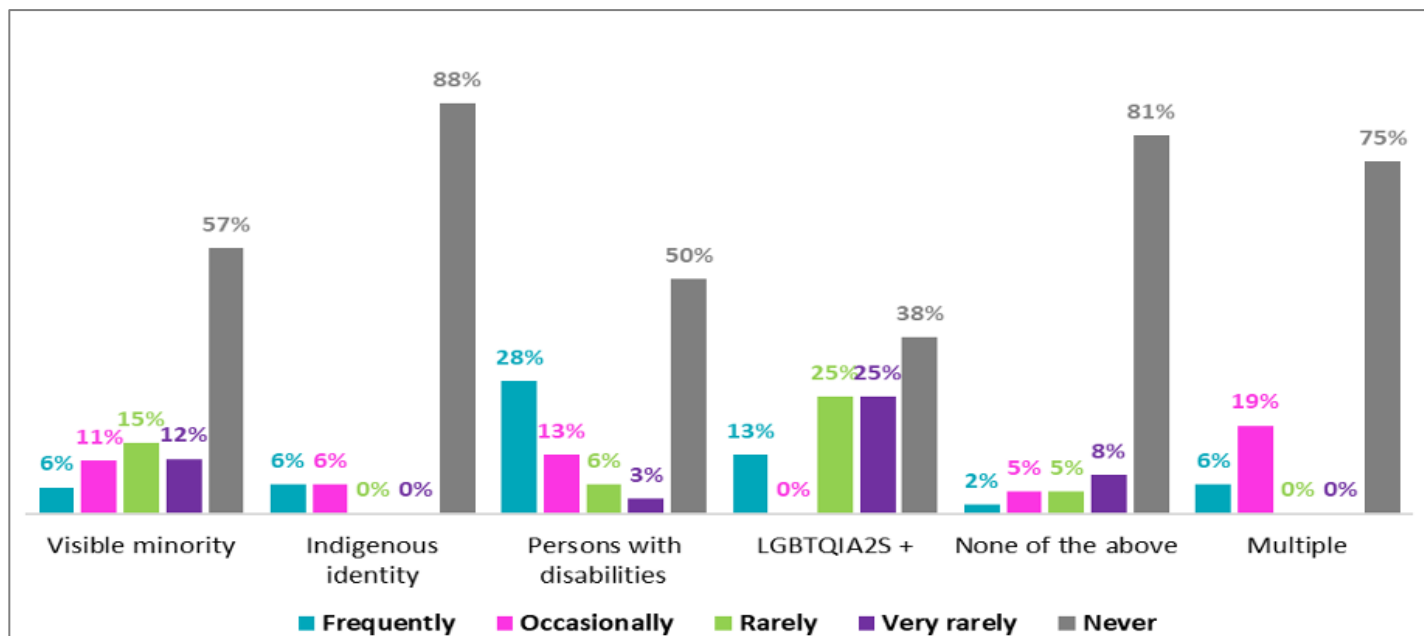
*Discouraged from joining an advanced level club*



*Note.* Figures 29 to 42 are based on responses to questions of observation of discrimination as an affiliate of the GTHL on ice and outside. Overall, a majority of all groups represented, except for persons with disabilities, said they never felt threatened, discouraged from joining a club, were wrongly disciplined, discouraged from joining a club, or treated unfairly by staff and team officials. However, more members of the equity seeking groups, including multiple identities felt frequently threatened, discouraged from joining an advanced level club, wrongly disciplined, given less time on the ice, and unfairly treated by team officials and staff than the non-equity seeking group.

**Figure 31**

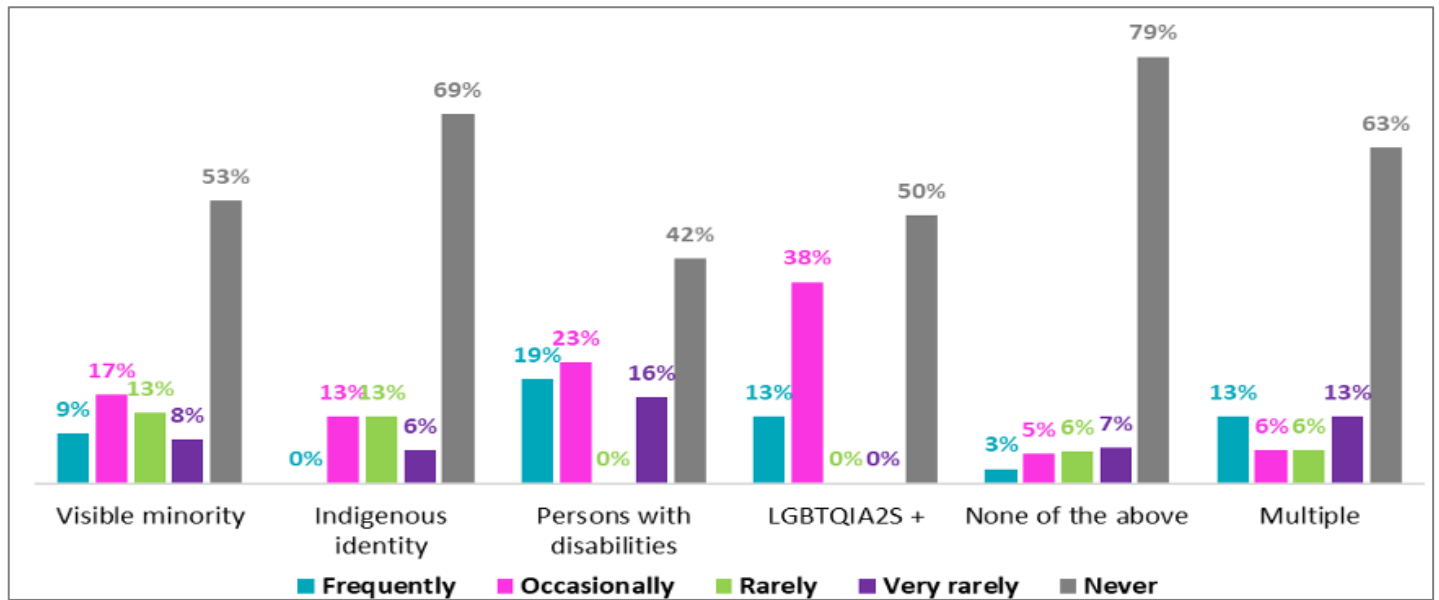
*Felt Wrongly Disciplined*



*Note.* Some respondents expressed in the survey that not enough was done by the GTHL regarding discipline. The figure above shows that visible minorities, those with disabilities and those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community were more likely than other groups, to say that they felt wrongly disciplined. "I think in terms of overt racism the league does a good job when it comes to discipline. But this is mostly reactionary. I think they need to look at more preventative measures through better education and exposure to broader perspectives. This would help address the systemic racism within the league, which I don't believe they have done much to address or even acknowledge" — survey participant belonging to a visible minority group.

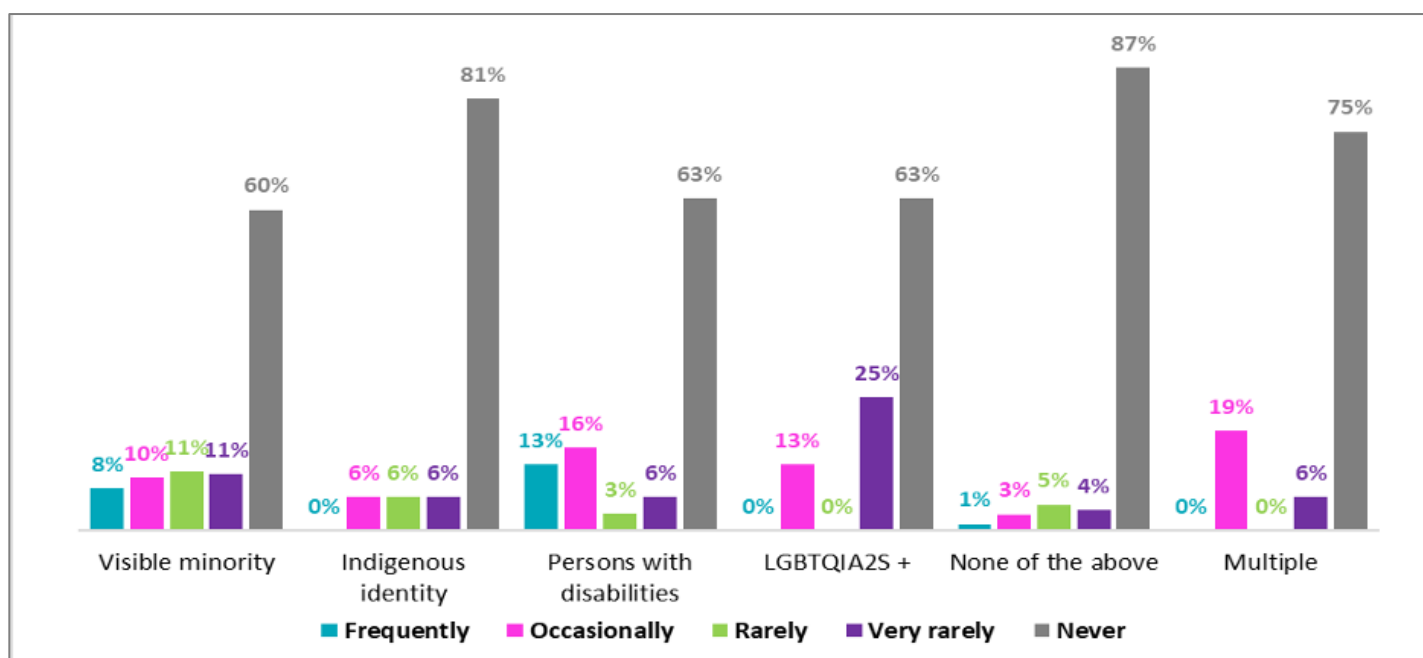
**Figure 32**

*Given less time on the ice*



**Figure 33**

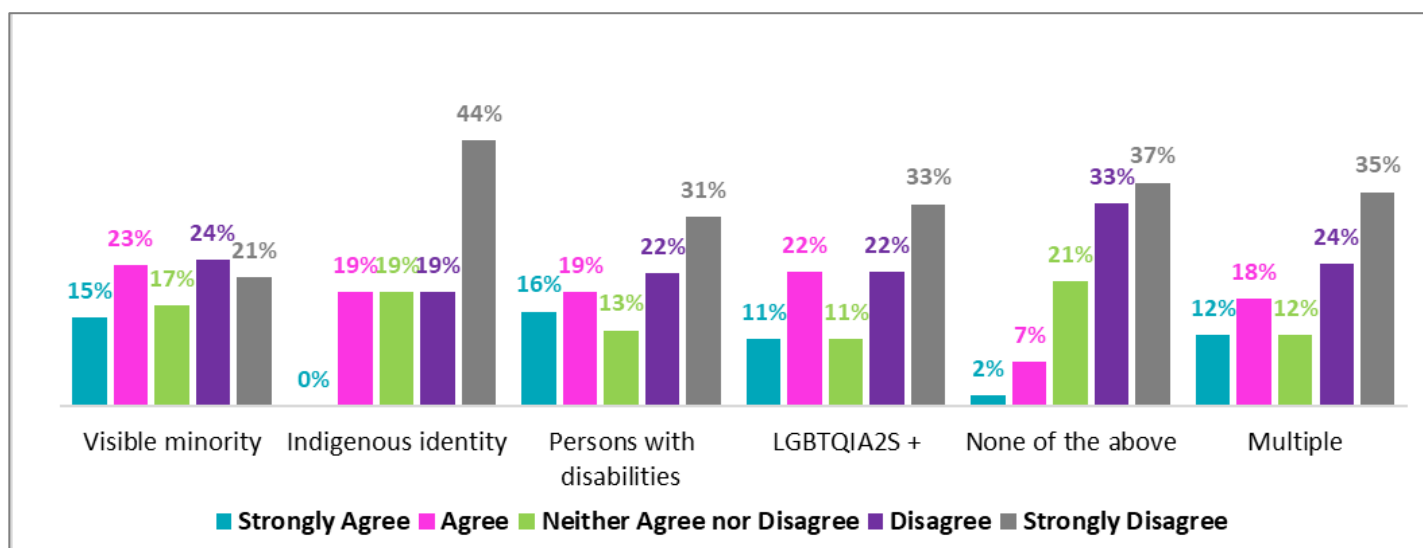
*Discouraged from joining a club*



*Note.* Higher proportion of persons with disabilities felt frequently threatened, discouraged from joining an advanced level club or a club, wrongly disciplined, given less time on the ice, unfairly treated by team officials and staff and other parents and athletes than the other groups. More visible minorities than all other groups reported being called racially insulting names than any other group.

**Figure 44**

*Received fewer opportunities*

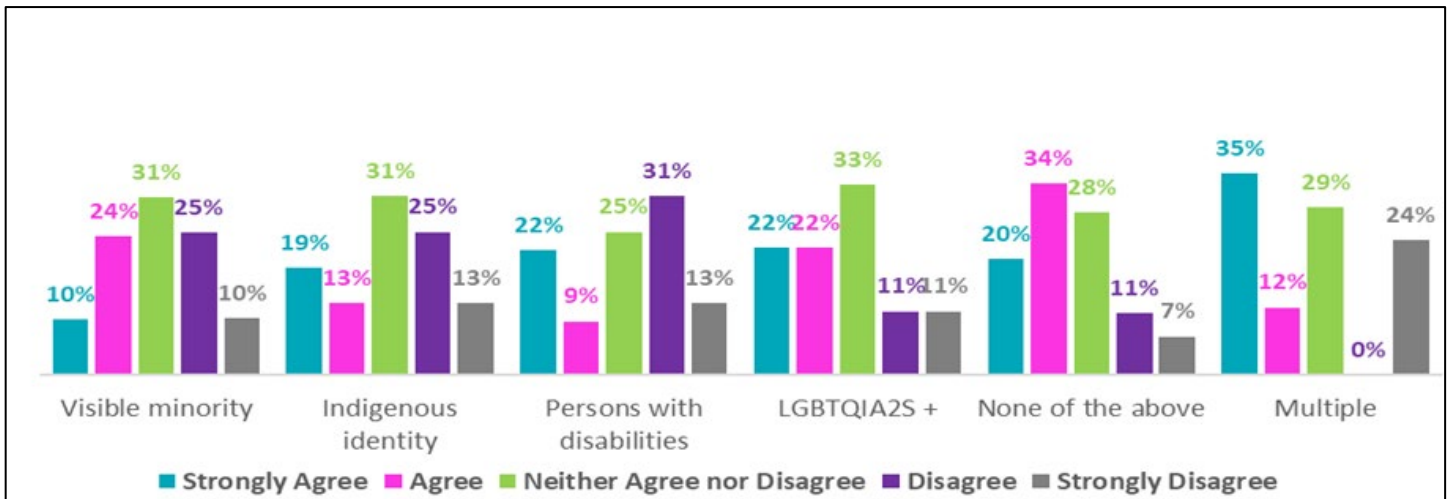


*Note.* However, almost similar proportions of all groups, except the visible minorities, strongly agreed that the GTHL creates a welcoming culture. However, more than 40% of the people with disabilities and a third of visible minorities and Indigenous disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement.

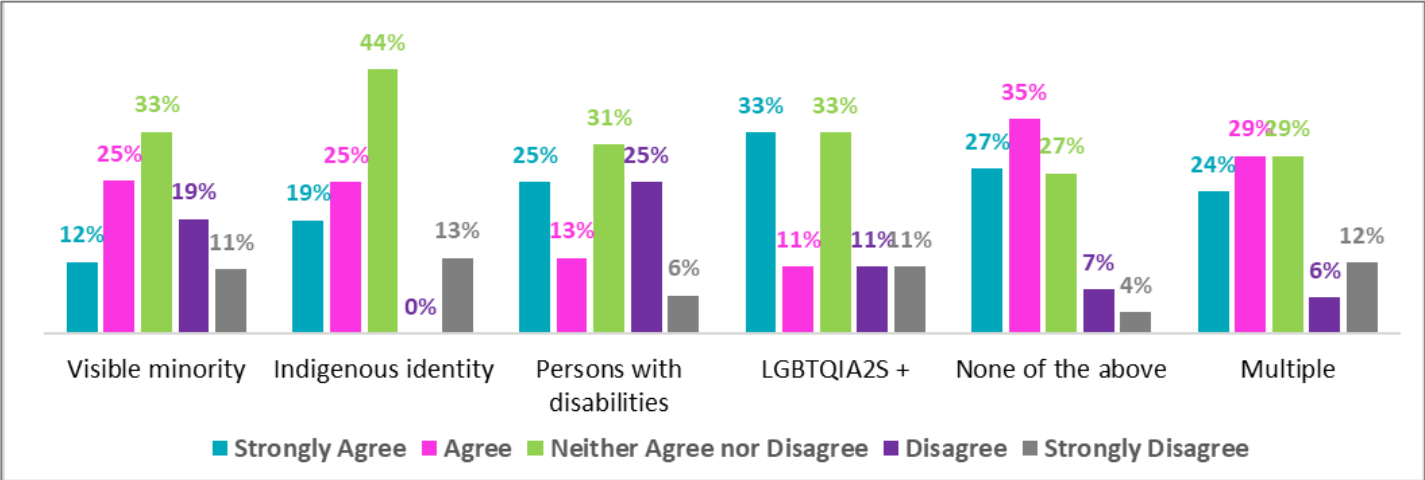
**Figure 45**

*The GTHL actively creates a welcoming culture*



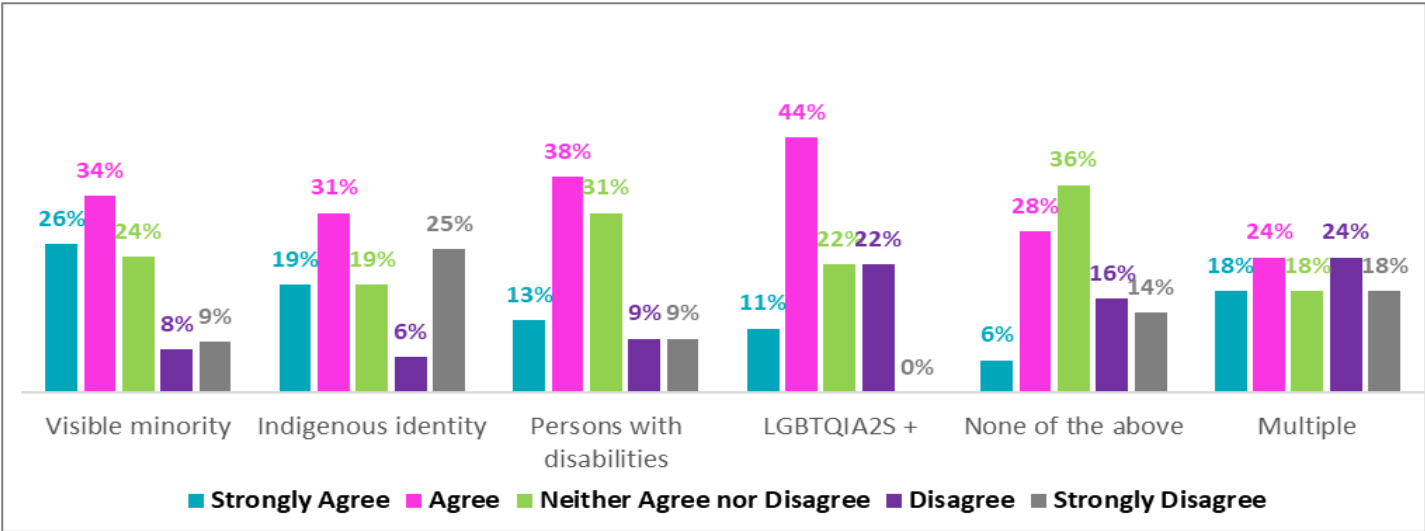


**Figure 48:**  
*The GTHL takes issues of racism and discrimination seriously*



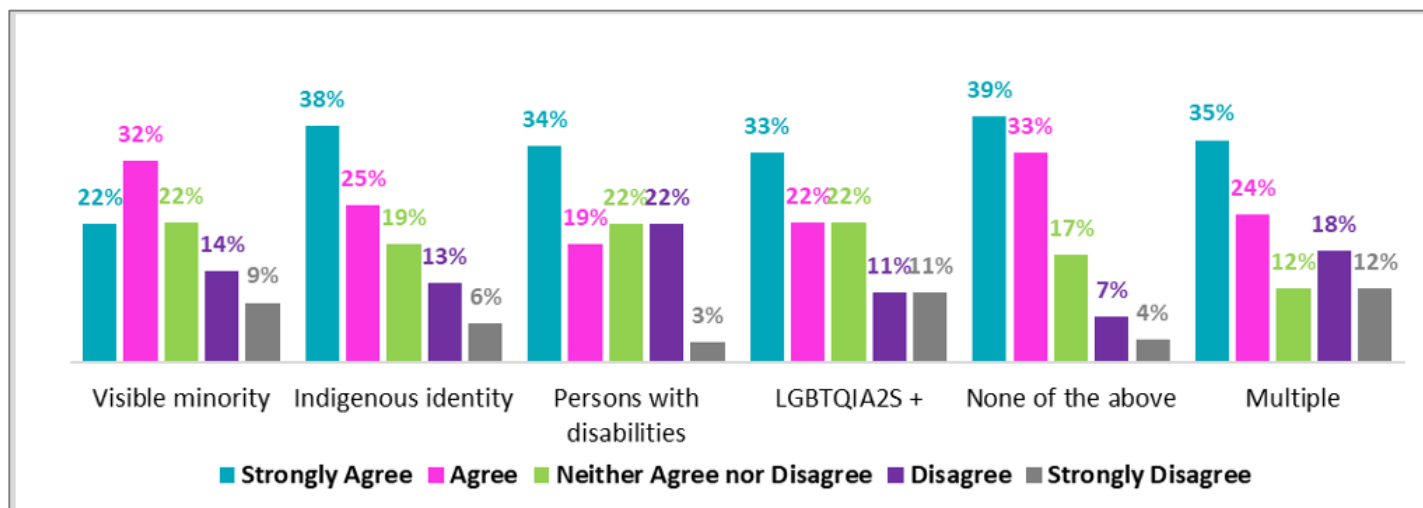
*Note.* More visible minorities and persons with disabilities disagreed/strongly disagreed that the GTHL takes issues of racism seriously (Figure 48, above), compared to non-equity seeking groups. Similarly, more of the equity seeking groups strongly agreed/agreed that prejudice exists in the GTHL (Figure 49, below).

**Figure 49**  
*Prejudice exists in the GTHL*



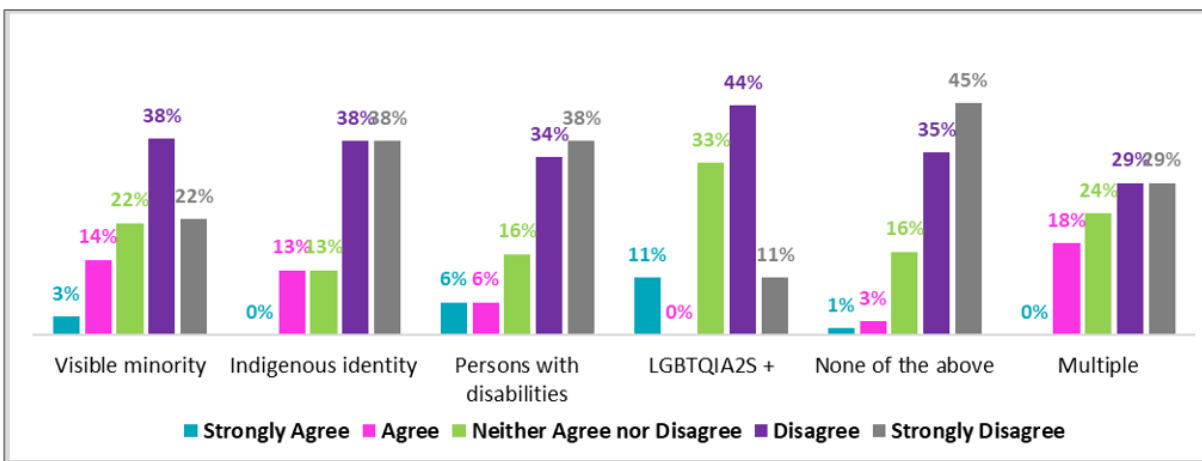
**Figure 50**

*People are treated the same regardless of their race or ethnicity*



**Figure 51**

*In the arena my athlete/I feel socially isolated*



*Note.* As shown in figures 50 and 51 above, the majority of all the groups agreed/strongly agreed that people are generally treated the same in the GTHL and did not feel socially isolated as participants in the GTHL. However, there was a large difference in the proportion of equity seeking groups and non-equity seeking group's agreements on whether non-minorities are treated better than minorities (Figure 52).

Of the respondents who commented about racism/discrimination in the GTHL, 42% talked about direct or indirect experiences of some form of discrimination in the league. Out of them, the majority (64%) cited racial discrimination, both overt and hidden. The overt forms include being called "racist names during play and also during handshakes" and on the ice. Others said, "racism definitely exists but under a veil".

Gender Discrimination was cited by a few respondents (19%), and one said, "sexism should have been included in this survey." "Girls are treated incredibly unfairly at all levels of play within the GTHL," they expanded, "and it is completely [sic] acceptable if not encouraged by the league".

"My child was discriminated against and excluded because she was playing with the boys. A coach told us to go find a girl's league to play in".

"We had a female teammate on a male-dominated team. The refs on numerous occasions made 'where are your figure skates?' remarks and picked on her during games".

2SLGBTQIA+ discrimination was cited by a few respondents (6%). Several LGBTQ families said they didn't always feel welcome; although they were polite, the team officials did not treat their athletes the same as others.

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