



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan



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About the Pan-Canadian Genome Library

The Pan-Canadian Genome Library (PCGL) is a national Canadian initiative that brings together human genomic and health data from research studies into a trusted data repository. Acting as a secure library, PCGL safeguards genomic data and enables its responsible sharing, empowering researchers with the high-quality information they need to drive discovery.

PCGL uses a data governance model that provides researchers with a single access point to genomic and health data, while ensuring data is securely managed through centralized and federated storage options. Built on internationally recognized standards, PCGL respects jurisdictional, ethical, and cultural requirements for the sharing of human genomic data and embeds Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles to support the meaningful representation of Canada's diverse populations.

Commitment to Indigenous Peoples

Our headquarters are based at McGill University on Tiohtià:ke, also known as Montréal, on land that has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous Peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg nations. Our members span the vast land that is now known as Canada, and are located in institutions in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. We acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples, including the Inuit, First Nations and Métis, who are the original inhabitants of these lands from times immemorable.

The PCGL remains firmly committed to upholding the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics), First Nations principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 – Chapter 9). These commitments guide all our activities and partnerships involving Indigenous data and participation.

To ensure ongoing, meaningful, and respectful engagement with all Indigenous communities, the PCGL has, since its inception, planned to establish an Indigenous Genetics Circle (IGC). This advisory group, comprising Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, community



members, academic professionals, healthcare practitioners, patient partners, and international Indigenous genomics experts, will provide guidance on existing and emerging issues that require Indigenous expertise.

Policies and procedures related to Indigenous data access are being developed and will receive guidance from the IGC, the Silent Genomes - Indigenous Background Variant Library (IBVL) Governance Committee, Indigenous team members and the Oversight Board. The PCGL is committed to respecting Indigenous principles and practices, including Indigenous Data sovereignty-based governance models.

Implementing EDI principles within the PCGL

The PCGL is an inter-institutional project currently hosted at McGill University, Canada. Details related to the PCGL's governance structure can be found in the [PCGL Governance Framework](#).

The EDI advisor will be responsible for coordinating with the leads of the PCGL working groups and committees, in collaboration with the Senior Project Manager, to ensure that the activities identified within the Action Plan are completed within their respective timelines. A report summarizing the completion of each task will be presented to the Executive Committee annually, and following approval, with the larger PCGL community to maintain accountability and transparency in the PCGL's EDI commitments.

Journey to EDI Action Plan

EDI principles were a main component of the initial funding call from the Canadian Institute for Health Research which supported the initial establishment of the PCGL. Furthermore, the PCGL has incorporated EDI from its beginning, with the recruitment of an EDI advisor in Year 2 of the initiative. In addition, the Data Diversity and Inclusion working group aims to build a comprehensive understanding of the diversity in Canadian genomic data collections, identify factors relevant to participation in genomic research for diverse groups, and develop guidance documents for the PCGL's team members regarding best practices to incorporate EDI principles in genomic research.

The PCGL's EDI Action Plan was informed by findings from a narrative review of EDI-related institutional documentation in Canada. An initial draft was written by the EDI advisor (Amirah-Iman Hicks), with input from the Training working group Lead (Michelle Brazas) and coordinator (Alexandra Smith), the Data Diversity and Inclusion Lead (Claude Bhérer) and team members, the Communications Administrator (Julia Ortiz), the PCGL co-leads (Ma'n Zawati and Guillaume Bourque), and the Senior Project Manager (Kimberley Begley).

The initial draft of the Action Plan was reviewed by the PCGL's co-leads. Consultations between the EDI advisor and the PCGL team were conducted and feedback was gathered on the Plan's proposed activities.



Principles at the PCGL

The PCGL acknowledges that to properly embed EDI principles within its tools and processes, we must first establish a baseline understanding of the relevant principles and their definitions. The following principles inform the PCGL's actions and we encourage everyone in our community to educate themselves on these principles and how they can be applied within their own environments:

Accessibility

A combination of aspects, physical or virtual, that influence a person's ability to function within an environment and to access it with ease [1].

Anti-oppression

Strategies, theories, actions, and practices that actively challenge systems of oppression on an ongoing basis in one's daily life and in social justice/change work. It seeks to recognize the oppression that exists in our society and attempts to mitigate its effects to eventually equalize power imbalances in our communities [2].

Anti-racism

The active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices and attitudes so that power is redistributed and shared equitably [2].

Decolonization

The active resistance against colonial powers, and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, and cultural independence and power that originate from a colonized nation owning Indigenous culture. This process occurs politically and applies to personal, societal, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression [2].

Diversity

Differences in lived experiences and perspectives of people that may include race, ethnicity, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical disability, mental disability, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, class and/or socio-economic situations [2].



Equity Achieving parity in policy, process and outcomes for equity-deserving people and groups while accounting for diversity. It considers power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes in three main areas: Representational equity, resource equity and equity-mindedness [2].	Representational equity The proportional participation at all levels of an institution [2].
	Resource equity The distribution of resources in order to close the equity gap [2].
	Equity-mindedness The demonstration of an awareness of, and willingness to, address equity issues [2].
Equity-deserving group/community A group of people who, because of systemic discrimination, face barriers that prevent them from having the same access to the resources and opportunities that are available to other members of society, and that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes [3].	
F.A.I.R. principles Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse of digital assets. The principles emphasise machine-actionability (i.e., the capacity of computational systems to find, access, interoperate, and reuse data with none or minimal human intervention) because humans increasingly rely on computational support to deal with data as a result of the increase in volume, complexity, and creation speed of data [7].	
Genetic ancestry Genetic ancestry shows the part of the world where an individual's ancestors may have lived. People whose ancestors lived in the same region of the world have similar patterns in their DNA [6].	
Inclusion Building a respectful and diverse community that ensures welcoming spaces and opportunities to flourish for all [2].	
Intersectionality The intertwining of social identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity, which can result in unique experiences, opportunities, and barriers. A theory coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s to draw attention to how different systems of oppressive structures and types of discrimination interact and manifest in the lives of marginalized people; for example, a queer black	



woman may experience oppression on the basis of her sexuality, gender, and race – a unique experience of oppression based on how those identities intersect in her life [4].

Reconciliation

Attempts made by individuals and institutions to raise awareness about colonization and its ongoing effects on Indigenous people. Also refers to the efforts made to address the harms caused by various policies and programs of colonization [5].



EDI Action Plan 2025-2028

The goal of the PCGL's EDI Action Plan for 2025 to 2028 is to outline the PCGL's commitment to embed EDI principles throughout its community, tools and processes. Acting as a living document, the PCGL's EDI Action Plan aims to address the following priorities for 2025-2028:

1. Community - Building the PCGL's community
2. Tools and Processes - Embedding EDI in the PCGL's tools and processes
3. Research - Innovation to advance equity in genomics

The PCGL's EDI Action Plan commits to adopting an intersectional lens within the proposed activities. We acknowledge that equity-deserving communities have multiple identities that can affect their experiences, opportunities and barriers that they may face. As such, while some activities may specifically target a particular group, we are aware that these identities are not all encompassing.

The PCGL's EDI advisor is responsible for coordinating the proposed activities under the mandate of Working Group 1 - Project & Data Coordination. Other team members, including the PCGL's Senior Project Manager, the Training Coordinator, and the Communications Administrator will also be involved in designing, actioning and tracking of relevant activities.

Accountability: All actions were reviewed to ensure they were specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). Based on the success of the Action Plan's implementation, other actions will be identified as the PCGL expands.



Pillar 1: Community

Building the PCGL's community

As the PCGL is being established, it strives to build a community that is inclusive of the diverse groups of people across Canada. This community includes the PCGL's team, researchers interacting with the PCGL, participants, partner organizations and the general public.

The PCGL recognizes the existing diversity gaps in genomics, globally. Our community expands and evolves, we aim to take meaningful actions towards advancing the inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds and from across Canadian Provinces and Territories. We will use an evidence-based approach, gathering data through surveys to assess inclusivity and identify potential areas of improvement. We further want to create dedicated spaces for groups historically under-represented, marginalized and/or under-resourced in health research, to learn about and mitigate existing barriers and co-create a shared vision of what equitable access to the PCGL and its resources look like. We will track the representativeness of the PCGL's team, researchers interacting with the PCGL and participants (Action 1.1), engage in various platforms to ensure meaningful community engagement with equity-deserving groups and increase general knowledge about the PCGL (Action 1.2), and raise awareness within our community regarding equity-relevant issues in genomics to promote the development of potential solutions (Action 1.3).



Action 1.1: Tracking representativeness

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
Demographic survey of the PCGL's team circulated annually	Survey report shared with the PCGL's Executive Committee and Oversight Board	Minimum 50% response rate	EDI Advisor, Senior Project Manager, Communications administrator	Spring 2026, 2027, 2028

Action 1.2: Outreach with equity-deserving groups

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
Participate in scientific workshops, conferences, and webinars, including community-focused events, to present the work being done by the PCGL's team.	An annual report summarizing conference presentations and communities engaged with that is shared with the PCGL community.	Presentations at a minimum of one international, one national and one community-focused conference/event per year	PCGL team members, Training coordinator, Senior Project Manager, EDI advisor	June 2026, 2027, 2028
Promote inclusion of equity-deserving groups in PCGL-hosted events, like the PCGL Bi-annual meeting and the monthly webinars, by actively developing engagement strategies.	Demographic survey completed by participants Summarizing measures taken to ensure representation of equity-deserving groups among speakers and participants (for example, targeted communications strategies). Summarizing other inclusion and accessibility needs actively	Report summarizing demographics of event participants and inclusivity measures undertaken presented to Executive Committee	EDI advisor, Senior Project Manager, Communications administrator, Training coordinator	Sept 2026, 2027, 2028



	addressed (for example, translation services, venue accessibility, etc).			
Highlight important dates related to equity-deserving groups in the PCGL's social media (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Pride Month, Emancipation Day, Disability Awareness Day/Month)	Tracking engagement with social media posts via likes, comments, shares and reposts	Minimum of 50 likes per social media posts Number of likes per social media post above the engagement with the average post A minimum of 1 post per important date released	EDI advisor, Communications administrator, Senior Project Manager	Sept 2026, 2027, 2028

Action 1.3: Knowledge mobilization of equity-relevant issues and solutions in genomics

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
Develop the PCGL EDI Action plan and share publicly	PCGL EDI Action Plan for 2025-2028	Action Plan publicly available on website Social media posts of Action Plan via LinkedIn, newsletter, website and presentation	EDI Advisor, Working group 3 Lead and team, Working group 1, Executive committee, Indigenous Genetics Circle	May 2026
Organize the 2 nd edition of the Advancing Equity in Genomics and Genomics in Canada (AEG2C) and Beyond symposium to showcase how issues in genomics and equity have progressed in Canada	Report summarizing key takeaways of symposium Summary of participants' demographics and results	Diversity targets (i.e. Career levels, institutions, fields and backgrounds) reached for invited speakers	Working group 3 Lead and Team, AEG2C Scientific Planning and Logistics committees	Dec 2026



	from symposium feedback survey	80% of in-person attendance capacity reached on both days Attendance of virtual sessions of minimum 80 participants from across Canada and beyond		
Develop a list of EDI resources publicly available for the PCGL's external community	Report outlining the development process and external consultations conducted	Engagement statistics with each resources	EDI advisor, Training coordinator	Dec 2027
Develop trainings and workshops for the general public related to bioinformatics and genomics to increase accessibility of the PCGL's specialized tools and resources	Track attendance for live events/worksho ps Track the number of views on online videos	Engagement statistics with each resources	Training coordinator, Communication s administrator	Dec 2027



Pillar 2: Tools and processes

Embedding EDI in the PCGL's tools and processes

To achieve the PCGL's objective to unify current efforts in genomic sequencing in Canada, the PCGL will develop a platform that enables the storing and responsible sharing of Canadian genomic datasets in a secure, accessible and federated framework. The PCGL is embedding EDI best practices in its tools and processes and will promote their use and implementation through the development of guidance documents and training materials.

To maximize the usability of this platform, the PCGL will implement accessibility and readability checks in the tool development pipeline (Action 2.1). In addition to unifying Canada's efforts in genomics sequencing, the PCGL will enable the study of social determinants of health and access to genomics research in Canada by developing guidance documents related to the collection, storage and responsible sharing of sociodemographic data (Action 2.2). To promote equity-mindedness by increasing general knowledge about EDI principles and practices in research, we will develop specialized training for researchers submitting or accessing data held within the PCGL (Action 2.3).



Action 2.1: Accessibility and readability checks

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
Develop a standardized protocol for documentation review to ensure consistent messaging, usage of inclusive language and incorporation of EDI	publicly available documentation adhere to the CAN/ASC - EN 301 549:2024 standards developed by Accessibility Standards Canada	Tracking the number of documents reviewed and any issues that arise with documentation comprehension or usage	EDI advisor, Training coordinator, Senior Project Manager, Executive committee PCGL team	June 2026, 2027, 2028

Action 2.2: Guidance for the collection of sociodemographic data

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
Developing a reference survey that can be used by research studies to collect sociodemographic data across Canada	Published guidance documents, including the PCGL reference survey for sociodemographic data, the PCGL guidance document and the Methods and data collection guide, on the PCGL's public platforms	Number of document downloads, number of questions related to sociodemographic data asked to help desk and answered by the Data Diversity and Inclusion working group Incorporation of sociodemographic data collection standards into the PCGL's data model for use by prospective studies	EDI advisor, Working group 3, Working group 2	June 2026
Incorporation of sociodemographic data collection standards into the PCGL's data model for use by prospective studies	Data Model version 1.0 including a separate data entity for participants	An increasing rate of submission of non-missing sociodemographic data over the	Working group 3, Working group 2	Dec 2026



	sociodemographic data; future updates to the Data Model	years for projects A number of prospective projects submitting sociodemographic data collected using the PCGL reference survey		
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Action 2.3: Trainings to enable EDI best practices in research

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
Mandatory trainings for the PCGL's team related to sex-and-gender based analysis, minimizing bias, anti-racism or Indigenous governance	Annual report that tracks attendance and collects feedback Annual workshop of an EDI-related topic presented to the PCGL team	Completion rate of 50%	EDI advisor, Training coordinator	Sept 2027
Mandating that researchers that request to access data held within the PCGL have completed trainings related to sex-and-gender based analysis, minimizing bias, anti-racism and Indigenous governance	Finalized list of recommended training sources	Tracking the number of researchers that request to access the PCGL Tracking which certificates researchers complete to gain access	EDI Advisor, Data Access Committee, Executive Committee	Sept 2026
Mandating that DAC members have EDI trainings (Indigenous governance, anti-Black racism, sex and gender)	Finalized list of recommended training sources	Integration of EDI training workflow in DAC processes	EDI advisor, Training coordinator, Working group 4, DAC, Executive committee	June 2028
Documenting how trainings developed/offered by the PCGL integrate EDI principles	Metrics on number of resources/	50% of PCGL offered resources mention	Training coordinator	Dec 2026



	offerings which include EDI Track number of users (e.g. clicks, attendance certificates) who attend PCGL-developed EDI training	EDI-relevant principles		
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Pillar 3: Research

Innovating to advance equity in genomics

The PCGL recognizes that advancing equity in genomics requires a clear understanding of who participates in genomics research, and what barriers to inclusion are faced by communities and researchers in the Canadian context. In a global landscape where genomic datasets show continued skew toward people of European ancestries, addressing these gaps is essential to ensure genomic discoveries and downstream applications benefit all communities. Furthermore, to mitigate bias, the PCGL's development team will develop equitable workflows with state-of-the-art genomics tools and data processing pipelines to maximise fair treatment of sequencing data and enable inclusion of all genetic ancestries.

To advance knowledge gaps in Canada, we will study the barriers and facilitators to participation in genomics research (Action 3.1) to build a comprehensive understanding of the diversity present in genomic studies conducted in Canada (Action 3.2). In addition, we will develop tools to enable equitable research that includes peoples from various across ancestry groups (Action 3.3).



Action 3.1: Barriers and facilitators to participation in genomics research

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
Conduct a Pan-Canadian web-survey to document the views, attitudes, willingness, intentions, and experiences of equity-deserving groups and identify associated factors related to achieving inclusiveness in data banking.	Launch of survey Publication detailing main findings	Report presented to Executive committee and PCGL team	Working group 3	June 2026
Conduct a web-survey targeting both Canadian and international biomedical researchers leading major genomic initiatives to examine their perspectives and practices on challenges in including diverse populations in genomics research	Launch of survey Publication detailing main findings	Report presented to Executive committee and PCGL team	Working group 3	June 2027

Action 3.2: Assessing diversity within datasets deposited in the PCGL

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
Review of sociodemographic data collected in retrospective studies deposited within the PCGL	Publication detailing main findings	Report presented to the Executive committee	Working group 2, Working group 3	Sept 2026, 2027, 2028
Enabling the discovery of datasets deposited within the PCGL using aggregated statistics on limited set of sociodemographic variables	Beta version of the PCGL's Research Portal	Launch of Research portal Ability to view summary statistics of sociodemographic data	Working group 2, Working group 3	June 2027

Action 3.3: New tools to enable equitable research

Activity	Deliverable	Success indicator	Responsible party	Timeline
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Structured discussions held annually with Working group 2 to maximize F.A.I.R. and EDI principles, and mitigate biases within workflows	Summary report detailing conclusions reached from the discussion	Attendance of 1 member from each subcommittee of Working Group 2	Working group 2 lead, Senior Project Manager, EDI advisor, Executive committee	June 2026, 2027, 2028
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Appendix 1. Revision History

This table outlines how this document was reviewed and modified in time.

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)	Internal or External	Version	Description	Author(s)
2025-12-01	Internal	0.1	Initial draft written	Amirah-Iman Hicks Claude Bhérer
2025-12-15	Internal	0.2	Draft circulated to PCGL co-leads (Ma'n Zawati and Guillaume Bourque), Training coordinator (Alexandra Smith) and Communications administrator (Julia Ortiz) for initial revisions.	Amirah-Iman Hicks Alexandra Smith Michelle Brazas Julia Ortiz Claude Bhérer
2026-01-27	Internal	0.3	Finalized content and circulated to Working Group 2 coordinator (David Bujold) for feedback on Pillar 3-Research and to Working Group 1 for Executive Committee revisions and preliminary approval	Amirah-Iman Hicks Ma'n Zawati Guillaume Bourque Kimberley Begley David Bujold Claude Bhérer
2026-03-26	Internal	0.4	Integrated comments from PCGL co-leads (Ma'n Zawati and Guillaume Bourque) and document prepared for internal consultations with PCGL team	Amirah-Iman Hicks Claude Bhérer
2026-04-01	Internal	0.5	Document circulated internally with PCGL team to collect feedback on proposed actions and timelines	Amirah-Iman Hicks Kimberley Begley
2026-06-08	Internal	0.7	Cleaned version of EDI Action Plan presented at PCGL June 9 2026 meeting	Amirah-Iman Hicks Claude Bhérer Kimberley Begley
2026-07-10	External	1.0	Public version of EDI	Amirah-Iman Hicks

Version 1.0

Valid as of July 2026



			Action Plan posted on website	Julia Ortiz Alexandra Smith
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