



STRATEGY FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Expanding our reach and creating inclusive and welcoming opportunities for everyone to access.



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We acknowledge and express gratitude to the indigenous peoples of British Columbia for the privilege of organising and participating in volleyball on the traditional, ancestral, and un-ceded lands across the province.

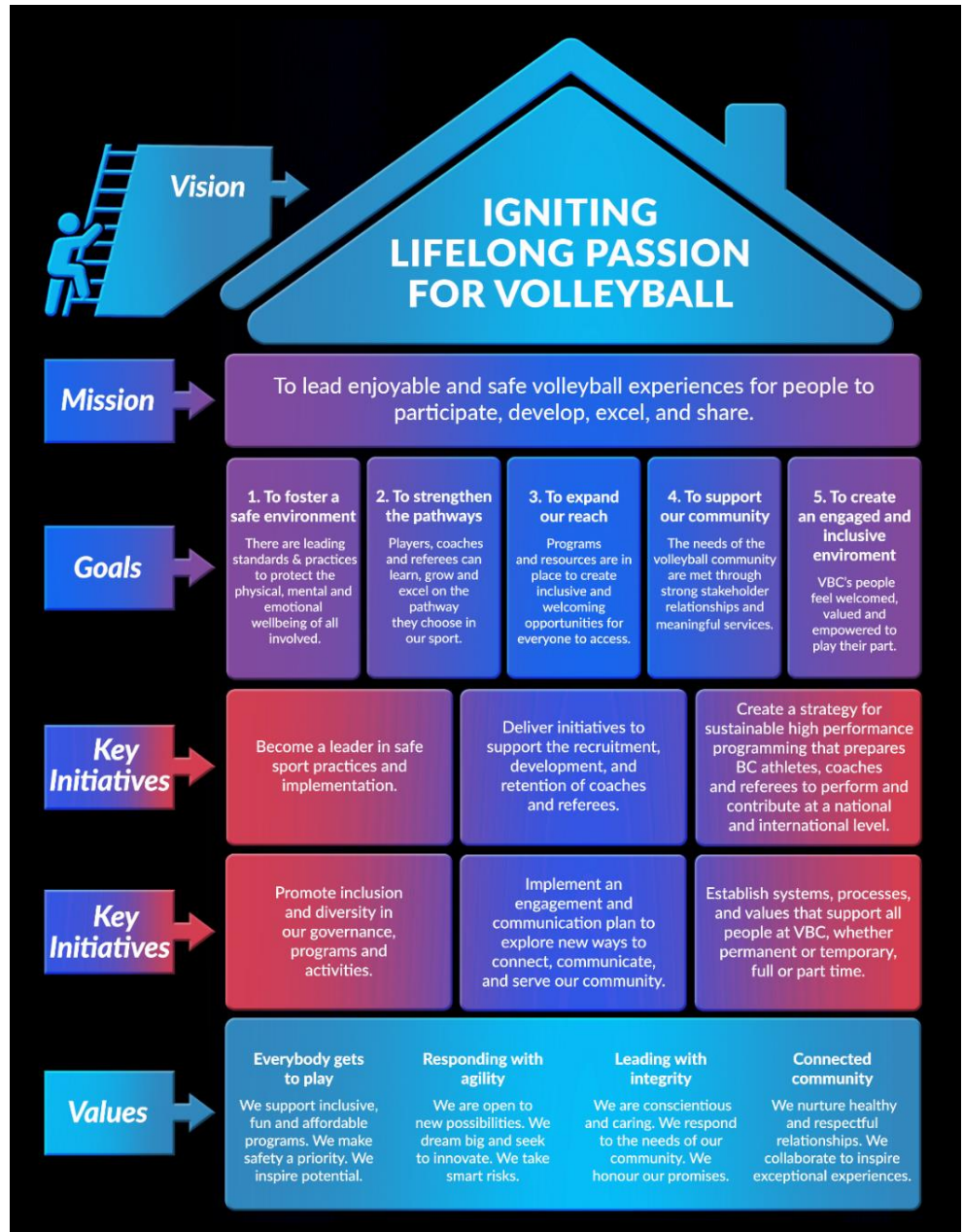
1. Introduction

Participation in sport is powerful for building healthy individuals and communities. We believe that volleyball should be welcoming and accessible to every individual who wants to participate. But we know that this is not always the case.

Like many organised sports, volleyball can be exclusive, unequally available, expensive, and welcoming to only certain segments of the population. Research across Canada shows that the following under-represented groups are more likely to experience barriers and less likely to participate in sport and physical activity:

- Women and Girls
- Persons with Disabilities
- LGBTQI2S Community
- Marginalized Youth
- Indigenous People
- Socio-economically Disadvantaged
- Newcomers to Canada
- Rural, Remote and Isolated Regions
- Older Adults

We have not traditionally done a good job of capturing detailed demographic data about our participants but we can assume that participation in volleyball across BC is equally as challenging and limiting for these groups. Our governance, operations, and systems that have been in place for years need critical review to ensure that they are still relevant and appropriate for encouraging broader participation.



Volleyball BC's Strategic Plan 2021-2024

Increasing participation among these under-represented groups and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion is one of the main themes in our **2021-2024 Strategic Plan**. In particular, we identified the specific goal of "Expanding our Reach" in which "programs, facilities, and resources are in place to create inclusive and welcoming opportunities for everyone to access." A key initiative for this area is to promote inclusion and diversity in Volleyball BC's governance, programs, and activities.

This Strategy for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion represents our commitment to this essential work over the next few years. The Strategy is broad, ambitious, and tackles some big areas. We understand that work in this space is a journey rather than a destination but we are excited to start putting one step in front of another to make change.

2. A Strategy for Volleyball BC or for Volleyball in BC?

We recognise that Volleyball BC is only one player in the volleyball system. Volleyball in BC is delivered by multiple clubs and organisations across the province. To create effective and broad-reaching systemic changes to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion requires everyone to be involved and committed.

We have kept this in mind while developing this Strategy. We have identified actions that are within Volleyball BC's influence and ability to deliver. However, we also acknowledge that, as the governing body, we have a broader responsibility and influence in creating change. So, wherever possible, we have added actions to educate, promote, and create resources to ensure that the work we are doing can be used by volleyball organisations and partners to support DEI across the system.

3. What is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging?

There are many interpretations of these key concepts. However, we used the following definitions when developing our strategy:

DIVERSITY - "who you are"

The visible and non-visible differences between people. It is what differentiates each one of us and might include gender, race, age, ethnicity, income level, and sexual orientation. Intersectionality is a term that acknowledges that social categorisations such as race, class, and gender are interconnected and that the intertwining of these different identities can result in unique experiences, opportunities, and barriers for people.

EQUITY - "addressing unique advantages or barriers"

The process of allocating resources, programs, and decision-making fairly to all people without any discrimination and

working toward fair outcomes for people or groups by treating them in ways that address their unique advantages or barriers.

INCLUSION - "what you need"

Creating a culture that embraces, respects, and values difference so that all people feel they belong and are valued. An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities and enables individuals and groups to feel safe, expected and valued for who they are.

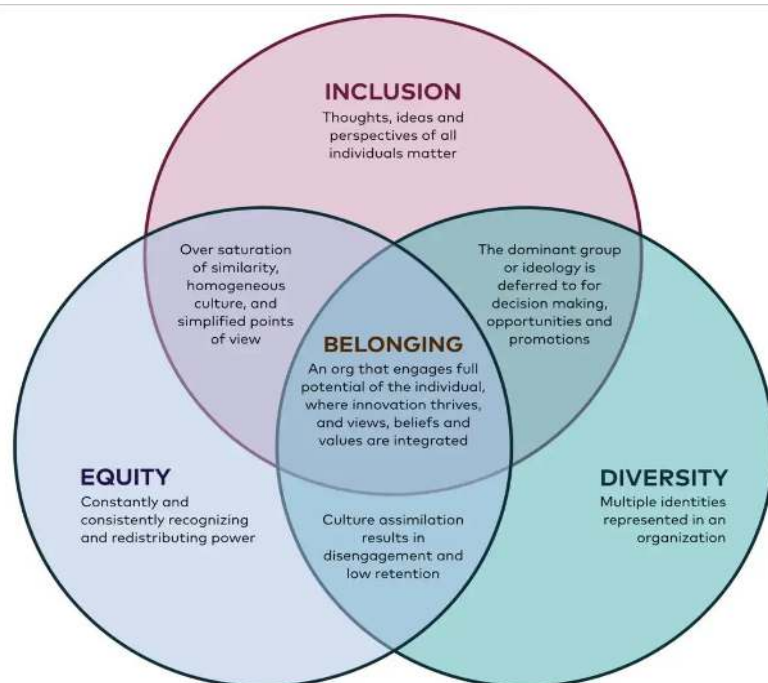
BELONGING - "how you feel"

The experience of personal involvement in an environment or experience so that people feel themselves to be an integral part of it. This is closely linked to diversity, equity, and inclusion because people must feel welcome, safe, engaged, and included in order to feel a sense of belonging.

Sources: Canadian Women and Sport and INclusion INcorporated

A good visual representation of the relationship between Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging has been developed by [Krys Burnette](#) in the diagram on the right.

When diversity, equity, and inclusion are able to coexist within teams, and inside of organizations, an individual will feel a sense of belonging.



4. Developing the Strategy

To develop a Strategy that meaningfully addresses such complex issues, we undertook a series of steps to assess best practice, to identify the issues in our own sport, and to prioritise actions for change. This process is outlined below:

May-Sep 2021



PHASE 1: Appointment of INclusion INcorporated, an external consultant

INclusion INcorporated collected diversity and inclusion data about Volleyball BC through:

- Evaluation of key policies and strategies
- Completion of the Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmark (GDEIB) to measure progress and identify areas of need across different organisational aspects of Volleyball BC
- Implementation of a BelongingMetric survey of staff, Board and contractors to understand the sense of belonging and status of diversity, equity, and inclusion within Volleyball BC.

Oct 2021



Presentation to Board and staff of results from research and data collection

Nov-Dec 2021



PHASE 2: Consultation and survey of key stakeholders within the volleyball community

Jan-Mar 2022



Facilitation by INclusion INcorporated to develop the Strategy for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- Analysis of gathered data and consultation
- Workshops with Board and staff
- Development of priority goals and action items

June 2022

Approval of the Strategy by the Volleyball BC Board

Between September 2021 and March 2022, Volleyball BC also participated in the [Same Game Challenge](#) led by Canadian Women and Sport. The Same Game Challenge involved a facilitated series of steps that allowed us to look at gender equity within Volleyball BC. We identified specific challenges, looked at data, consulted with our members, and identified steps that we would take to ensure that we are promoting gender equity throughout the organisation. The results of this work are also incorporated into the development of this Strategy.



5. What did we learn?

Our starting point for developing this Strategy was to understand where we are today. Over several months, we gathered data, undertook research, and consulted with our members and stakeholders to identify the relevant issues that volleyball faces. The key themes that emerged from this work are outlined below.

We need better data. We have not done a good job of capturing information about our registered participants beyond age, gender, and location. To learn how to both meet the needs of our existing members and expand our reach, we must ask more questions to understand demographic profiles and learn about lived experiences.

Volleyball BC has not adequately addressed diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations within our policies and operations. We need to review existing policies to ensure that terminology, content, and considerations uphold our priority on DEI. There are also gaps in our operations where we need to evolve and address emerging issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

“Volleyball BC should be the leader creating opportunities that are fair and impartial. Creating a culture of ensuring everyone feels a sense of equity and having a collaborative voice.”

“A small favouring towards people who “look” like a volleyball player (tall, spandex, knee pads, good shoes, etc.)”

We have to diversify and expand our communications, marketing, and promotion of volleyball. Our use of imagery, language, and the stories that we tell are typically focused on certain demographics without consideration of other experiences.

Our members felt that Volleyball BC can play a unique role in providing resources, training, and tools to the volleyball community so that we can collectively provide programs and services that are more inclusive and welcoming to everyone.

“If Volleyball BC doesn’t deliver on these initiatives, then I don’t think anyone will.”

“There are less opportunities for those who can’t afford to play volleyball in certain areas like the inner city.”

“One of the biggest challenges I see is the cost of club volleyball increasing year after year which will significantly impact who is able to participate.”

Participation in volleyball is becoming an activity for those with money. In particular, club volleyball is getting more and more expensive which means that cost is becoming a barrier for those who have traditionally participated in our sport. This makes it even more challenging for groups that face additional barriers to participation.

Addressing gender equity doesn't always mean women and girls. Our data shows that 70% of players in the club system are girls. We need to explore, address, and encourage more boys to participate in our sport.

“VBC needs to find a way to have more boys playing the club level.”

“Leagues in community centres for all ages/skill levels, no-cost program for high school students to get certified as a coach/ref and these players giving back to their community/school.”

Club volleyball is only one pathway in volleyball. We must create other accessible formats, programs, and pathways for people to experience volleyball, particularly at a grassroots level or by working with other community agencies that can reach different demographics.

We lack female coaches and referees, especially at the higher levels of coaching and officiating. Feedback from focus groups with female referees and coaches identified mentorship, connection, and profile-raising as key priorities to encourage more women and girls to take on these leadership roles.

“I wanted to quit many times and I cried a lot and if I didn’t have that mentorship, I would have quit too. That friendship and mentorship I had throughout the years, it helped. The people surrounding me were really good.”

“Work with Indigenous groups to provide opportunities for indigenous youth (especially girls to play).”

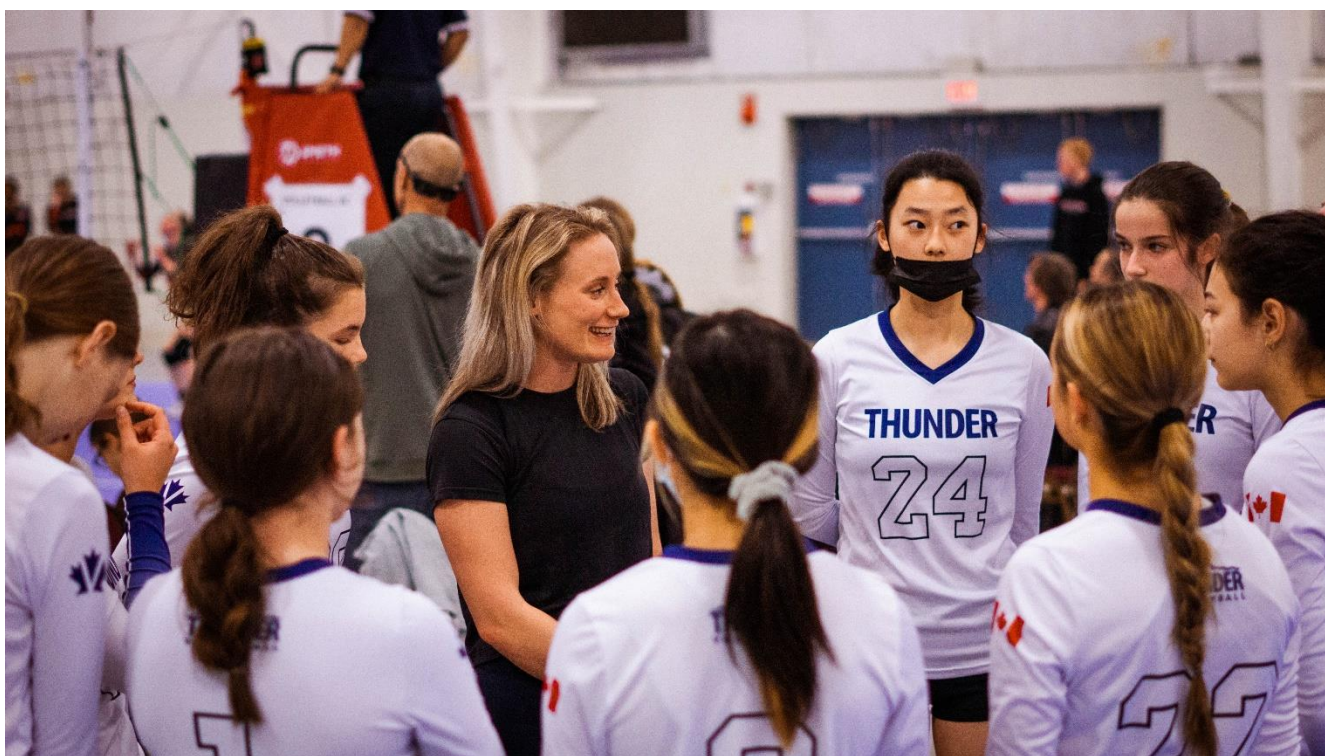
We support the Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council, particularly with their Team BC volleyball programs, but we could be more proactive and identify other collaborative opportunities with indigenous groups and communities.

The Harry Jerome Sport Centre is the training home for the BC members of the Women’s National Sitting Volleyball Team but sitting volleyball is not available at a community level and there is little awareness in British Columbia.

“VBC should create an environment where athletes with disabilities feel comfortable playing sports. There should be coaches trained in working with athletes with disabilities and there should be incorporation of Sitting Volleyball with every team, so that athletes that choose Sitting Volleyball can do so comfortably.”

“Be a leader in progressive thinking and taking action. Have a deep understanding of what actually needs to happen and hire people who are driven and want to put in the work to be as inclusive as possible.”

There is scope for Volleyball BC to be more intentional about encouraging diversity in its governance, leadership, and human resources. We can lead by example and ensure that we are reflective of the wider society in which we operate.



There were passionate contributions from everyone we consulted and we are grateful to have received them.

This Strategy for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion seeks to respond to the themes that were raised. Over the next sections, you will learn how we have translated these themes into priorities for action to be undertaken over the following years.

6. Our Strategy

COMMITMENT STATEMENT

Empowering our community to remove barriers to participation and be welcoming to all participants

STRATEGIC PILLARS

INCREASE CAPACITY

(Education & Policy)

SUPPORTIVE PATHWAYS

(Coaches, Officials & VBC Board and staff)

REMOVE BARRIERS

(Programs)

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

(External Communities, Clubs & Partners)

GOALS

- A. Review policies to ensure/address the creation of safe environments through systemic change.
- B. Identify gaps in knowledge and actively develop resources to address these gaps
- C. Develop clear and simple training, tools and resources for our members.
- D. Increase awareness of DEI principles, safety and well-being, and support systems.
- E. Ensure consultation and accountability with the Volleyball BC community

- A. Increase number of females at all levels of coaching and officiating.
- B. Proactively seek to understand barriers and retention issues in coaching and officiating.
- C. Encourage diversity in Volleyball BC leadership positions

- A. Establish alternative and accessible volleyball formats for grassroots engagement.
- B. Increase affordability and opportunities for reducing cost of volleyball
- C. Improve access and awareness of sitting volleyball.
- D. Deliver low barrier opportunities for Newcomers to Canada and other communities that do not traditionally engage in volleyball

- A. Increase Indigenous Participation
- B. Identify and support community organisations that currently provide volleyball for youth
- C. Create partnerships with equity-deserving groups to help remove barriers to volleyball.
- D. Encourage volleyball clubs to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into their programming and governance

Strategic Pillar One: Increase Capacity

GOAL	ACTION	TIMELINE	OUTCOME
A. Review policies to ensure/address the creation of safe environments through systemic change.	Embed EDI philosophy into all policies	Short (Year 1)	√ Review undertaken of all VBC policies. √ Adjusted language and content where appropriate.
	Review procedures with fairness and psychological safety in mind	Short (Year 1)	√ Review undertaken of all operational procedures. √ Adjusted language and content where appropriate.
	Identify and complete gaps in policies and procedures.	Short (Year 1)	√ Review undertaken of all governance and operational policies against best practice. √ Development of any missing policies to ensure that we are in alignment with best practice.
	Make all policies and procedures easy to read and accessible	Short (Year 1)	√ Development of "plain English" versions of all key policies to ensure that our members are able to understand.
B. Identify gaps in knowledge and actively develop resources to address these gaps	Create methods for data collection and information on demographics	Short (Year 1)	√ Review of current demographic data captured by our registration system. √ Development of appropriate methods of data collection where needed.
	Identify and deliver training and education on DEI to VBC Board, staff and contractors	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Audit completed of VBC Board, staff and contractors. √ Training opportunities identified. √ Implementation of training/education.
C. Develop clear and simple training, tools and resources for our members	Assess opportunities and needs for training, tools and resources across all member groups. Establish priority of implementation	Short (Year 1)	√ Review completed of different member groups. √ Prioritisation set among member groups in terms of urgency of training, tools and resources.
	Identify and implement training, tools and resources for different member groups.	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Training, tools and resources identified and developed for each member group. √ Roll out and dissemination of resources to all member groups
	Develop education opportunities for volleyball community around EDI topics	Med (Year 1-2)	√ 3 annual opportunities identified and delivered to general volleyball community
	Create a member platform to share resources, best practice, and support	Med (Year 2)	√ Social media platform or other forum developed and launched for coaches and referees

D. Increase awareness of DEI principles, safety and well-being, and support systems.	Develop a communications plan to promote awareness and highlight work in DEI.	Short (Year 1)	√ Communication plan produced with clear objectives and timelines
	Create clear communication around different pathways and formats of volleyball	Med (Year 2)	√ Development of communication tools on smashball, sitting volleyball, and other formats. √ Implementation and dissemination of communication tools to membership.
	Proactively seek and deliver diverse representation in VBC communications, including images, translation and all media	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Intentional selection of diverse images used in all communication materials. √ Review of key documents for translation √ List and outreach to ethnic media
E. Ensure consultation and accountability with the Volleyball BC community	Establish a DEI Committee/Working Group	Short (Year 1)	√ DEI Cttee/Working Group established.
	Regularly report and evaluate DEI Strategy with engagement of community	Ongoing	√ Report issued quarterly to Board. √ Report issued bi-annually to community



Strategic Pillar Two: Supportive Pathways

GOAL	ACTION	TIMELINE	OUTCOME
A. Increase number of females at all levels of coaching and officiating	Conduct focus groups and survey to identify barriers and opportunities for females in coaching and officiating	Short (Year 1)	√ Summary paper produced identifying barriers and support required to increase number of females in coaching and officiating
	Develop mentorship initiatives targeted at female referees and female coaches	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Development of 1 mentorship initiative for referees and 1 mentorship initiative for coaches.
	Facilitate opportunities for female coaches and referees to connect, collaborate, and support each other.	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Minimum 1 opportunity for female referees and 1 opportunity for female coaches to connect provided annually.
	Create intentional opportunities for female coaches and referees in VBC activities and, where possible, in the wider volleyball community	Medium – Long (Year 2-3)	√ Creation of minimum 1 initiative targeted at female coaches for VBC programs. √ Creation of minimum 1 initiative targeted at female referees at VBC events. √ Development and promotion of resources to clubs and volleyball organisations to support female coaches and referees.
	Showcase and raise the profile of female coaches and referees	Ongoing	√ Communications plan developed. √ Minimum of 2 annual opportunities to specifically showcase / raise the profile of female coaches and referees
B. Proactively seek to understand barriers and retention issues in coaching and officiating	Implement an optional exit interview process for VBC coaches and referees	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Development of exit interview/questionnaire. √ Implementation of interview/questionnaire annually. √ Analysis of results completed annually.
	Capture and review demographic data about coaches and referees	Short (Year 1)	√ Annual review of registration data at end of membership year (August). √ Qualitative information about referee and coach experience captured in Annual Survey. √ Profiles and information about coaches and referees developed annually to identify changing demographics
	Create opportunities for feedback and consultation with coaches and referees.	Short (Year 1)	√ Annual Member Survey completed annually. √ Focus groups and online opportunities identified and implemented.

C. Encourage diversity In VBC leadership positions	Embed DEI considerations into HR procedures and practices.	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	✓ Review of HR Policy to embed DEI language, terminology and practices. ✓ Policy adopted by HR and Governance Cttee. ✓ Procedures developed as required.
	Regularly review Board and governance structure to identify opportunities to ensure diversity of leadership	Ongoing	✓ Board and Committee skills matrix and composition reviewed annually. ✓ Annual identification of opportunities to increase diversity.
	Explore internship and mentorship opportunities within VBC.	Medium – Long (Year 2-3)	✓ Audit/review of internship and mentorship programs relevant to VBC. ✓ Development and implementation of internship/mentorship program to be launched by end 2021.

FEMALE Mentorship Program

WHAT TO EXPECT

Connection

A project to provide female coaches and referees the opportunity to increase experience, confidence and knowledge.

Education

The program will provide centralized online support, talks from experts and facilitated mentorship to emerging female coaches and referees to support you in your growth and development in the sport.



Strategic Pillar Three: Remove Barriers

GOAL	ACTION	TIMELINE	OUTCOME
A. Establish alternative and accessible volleyball formats for grassroots engagement	Develop an implementation plan for smashball.	Short (Year 1)	√ Implementation plan produced and delivered √ Roll out dates established
	Identify opportunities to showcase and to pilot smashball	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Delivery of 3 opportunities to showcase and pilot smashball.
	Pilot house leagues for smashball	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Roll out dates established and programs set up.
	Develop Train To Play programs for teen youth to "catch up"/ bridge the gap of entry to competitive model	Medium – Long (Year 2-3)	√ Development of program. √ Delivery of pilot programs.
B. Increase affordability and opportunities for reducing cost of volleyball	Identify strategic partnerships/grant opportunities for low/no-cost programs	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Database of granting opportunities identified annually √ Successful application for minimum 1 grant for low/no-cost programs per year.
	Create VBC bursaries and athlete support for high-cost VBC programs	Medium – Long (Year 2-3)	√ Development of bursary program. √ Identification of external support opportunities for VBC programs.
	Provide resources and support for clubs to fundraise and access grants	Medium – Long (Year 2-3)	√ Resources collated and shared with clubs. √ Minimum of 1 event per year hosted for clubs that is focused on fundraising/grants
C. Improve access and awareness of sitting volleyball	Initiate external partnerships and grant opportunities to support development of sitting volleyball	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Minimum of 1 grant opportunity secured to support sitting volleyball development.
	Leverage our connection with national team athletes to identify opportunities to showcase and pilot sitting volleyball within existing VBC events and programs	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Minimum of 3 opportunities created annually within existing or new programs.
	Create opportunities for coach development to support sitting volleyball	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ 1-2 coach workshops held annually.

D. Deliver low barrier opportunities for Newcomers to Canada and other communities that do not traditionally engage in volleyball	Secure multi-year funding to ensure sustainability of Intro to Volleyball for Newcomers program	Ongoing	√ Min of 1 new grant identified and secured annually.
	Deliver a minimum of 1 Newcomer pilot program for every region in BC.	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Min of 1 Newcomer pilot program delivered in every region of BC annually.
	Identify new partnerships to reach a diversity of groups within the Newcomer community	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ 2-3 new partners identified annually to support delivery of programs.
	Share best practice and develop a tool kit and resources for a) clubs to deliver newcomer programming and for b) community agencies interested in delivering volleyball	Medium – Long (Year 2-3)	√ Tool kits and resources developed for clubs. √ Tool kits and resources developed for community agencies. √ Participation in sharing of best practice with other sport agencies in this area.



Strategic Pillar Four: Build Partnerships

GOAL	ACTION	TIMELINE	OUTCOME
A. Increase Indigenous Participation	Strengthen relationship with ISPARC to increase support for high performance and grassroots programming opportunities	Short (Year 1)	√ Annual participation in ISPARC regional meetings and initiatives. √ Support provided for Team BC as required by ISPARC.
	Identify other Indigenous groups including: Friendship centers, youth groups, schools, etc	Short (Year 1)	√ Database of indigenous groups developed with identification of opportunities.
	Create a plan of initiatives in response to specific assistance that communities need to thrive	Short – Med (Year 1-2)	√ Assessment of opportunities and plan developed in collaboration with indigenous partners.
	Implement identified actions and initiatives	Medium – Long (Year 2-3)	√ Implementation of plan with delivery of 1 initiative annually.
B. Identify and support community organisations that currently provide volleyball for youth	Environmental scan of youth programs that engage in or could engage in volleyball outside of the club system (eg. boys and girls clubs, YMCA, afterschool groups, etc).	Short (Year 1)	√ Database of potential community partners and delivery agencies developed.
	Create and deliver resources to support community organisations and youth programs without 'taking over' the space.	Medium (Year 2)	√ Implementation of resources with delivery of 1 initiative annually
C. Create partnerships with equity-deserving groups to help remove barriers to volleyball	Undertake a provincial scan to identify potential partnerships and opportunities with equity-deserving groups	Short (Year 1)	√ Minimum of 1 grant opportunity secured to support sitting volleyball development.
	Identify the needs and support required to support equity-deserving groups participate in volleyball	Medium (Year 2)	√ Minimum of 3 opportunities created annually within existing or new programs.

D. Encourage volleyball clubs to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into their programming and governance	Share best practice for clubs on diversity in governance and leadership	Medium (Year 2)	✓ Development of a resource/ toolkit for clubs around diversity in governance and leadership
	Develop toolkits, resources and support for clubs to implement accessible grassroots and community programs.	Medium (Year 2)	✓ Development of toolkits and resources, and sharing of best practice to encourage grassroots and community programs



7. Measuring Impact

This Strategy for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion outlines some ambitious initiatives. How will we measure the impact of this work and know whether we are creating change?

7.1 Key Indicators

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are complex concepts and difficult to measure. Quantitative data only tells us some of the picture - it cannot tell us whether someone feels welcome, included, or a sense of belonging. Despite this, we have identified some key indicators to get a sense of progress towards our goals. Our research and consultation provides us with benchmark information in each of these areas from which we can assess changes.

- Number of grassroots and targeted community initiatives.
- Creation of partnerships and programs with community and social organisations representing under-represented groups.
- Increased participation of under-represented groups in volleyball.
- Perception of belonging and inclusion among Volleyball BC members, Board and staff.
- Perception of enjoyment and belonging among participants in Volleyball BC programs.
- Improvement in Volleyball BC's scores for the Global Diversity Equity Inclusion Benchmark.

7.2 Evaluation and Reporting

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are dynamic concepts and change is continual as new knowledge, best practices, and understanding emerges. We need our Strategy for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to be flexible and regularly evaluated to check that it is still relevant. We are also committed to sharing this work with our members.

- We will establish a DEI Working Group to provide leadership, input, and lived experience that can inform the Strategy.
- Staff will evaluate delivery of the areas of action on a quarterly basis.
- The Board will receive regular staff reports to ensure that we are making progress.
- A full scale review of the Strategy will be conducted annually using information from the Key Indicators above.
- We will share our work annually with our members and the wider volleyball community

Providing volleyball that is accessible, welcoming, and inclusive makes our sport stronger and more impactful across the province. This Strategy marks the start of a new phase of our journey. We look forward to working with our stakeholders and members to deliver this Strategy and create positive changes.



Acknowledgements & Appreciation

- A huge thank you to Andrea Carey and Laura McPhie from INclusion INcorporated who educated, advised, and steered us through the journey of creating this Strategy. We could not have done this without you!
- Thank you to Canadian Women and Sport for selecting us to participate in the Same Game Challenge that supported us to carry out research and consultation on gender equity. An even bigger thank you to the female coaches and referees who participated in our focus groups and whose words contributed to this Strategy.
- Our deepest gratitude to the following individuals who took time to participate in our survey and consultation: Chris Densmore, Joe Moreira, Stephen Epp, Stephen Orteza, Sean Sanderson, Brian Ee, Liz Yoon, Chris Dahl, Danielle Ellis, Kabir Hosein, Christian Redmann, Jeff Gogol, Julie Young, Lisa Tam, Johan Wilson, Jeff Ross, Jeremy Wilson, and Akash Grewal.
- We gratefully acknowledge the support and leadership of our Board and staff in committing to expanding our reach and becoming more accessible.
- Finally, thank you to all the athletes, coaches, referees, club directors, and parents who work to make volleyball a better place. We hope that you see in here the changes that you wish for in our sport.

Staff Leads: Emma Gibbons, Kiruthika Rathanaswami & Lesley Rowe
January 2023

