

2021 - 2022

EQUITY REPORT



Land Acknowledgement

Fora operates on the land known under its colonial name of Toronto, Ontario, in the land now called Canada.

“Toronto” is derived from the Mohawk word “Tkaronto,” meaning “the place in the water where the trees are standing.” This land is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, the Huron Wendat, the Métis, and the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

To acknowledge this traditional territory is to recognize its significance for the Indigenous people who lived and continue to live upon it. Fora exists in solidarity with these nations.

With Fora's community spread across the globe, we recognize that there are many nations engaging in ongoing struggles against settler colonialism and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their land.

We also recognize that land acknowledgements should go beyond simply naming the lands on which we are located and should push us to work towards reconciliation and anti-colonialism in every aspect of our work.

About Fora

In 2009, Fora, formerly G(irls)20, launched to ensure underrepresented voices were included in, and heard at, decision-making tables. We take our mandate seriously, and work to ensure these voices inform all aspects of Fora's operations, policies, programming, and decision-making processes.

Through program check-ins, focus groups, surveys, steering committees, and community feedback, we remain steadfastly committed to ensuring the experiences and insights shared by the Fora community are implemented – both within our organization, and outside of it.

We are committed to intentionally integrating feedback and changes to our programs, events, communications, policies, and experiences. When immediate changes are not possible or clear, we prioritize research and learnings, to advise what happens next.

Over a decade later, Fora's work to place young leaders facing gender discrimination at the centre of decision-making processes continues. This report is an essential measure of accountability to our community and ourselves, as we continue to make equity a priority in our organization and our work.



About this Equity Report

In August 2020, our [Equity Action Plan](#) was published and immediately implemented to adjust operations and address equity gaps existing within the organization. Each year, we publish an annual Equity Report to share our progress, reflect on our challenges, set goals, and review and renew our commitments.

Since publishing our Equity Action Plan, public conversations about and calls for meaningful progress towards equity, inclusion, and representation continue to grow louder. We have witnessed the ways the global pandemic has set back years of progress made towards gender equity, as those with intersecting marginalized identities continue to face the disproportionate impact, including worsened health outcomes, increased rates of domestic violence, steeper job losses, and a heavier burden of unpaid labour. Activists and organizers have continued to highlight ways systemically entrenched inequities threaten the safety, wellbeing and livelihoods of individuals and communities.

Our community continues to call for justice in all its forms: including racial justice, Indigenous justice, gender justice, disability justice, queer justice, and climate justice, to highlight a few. As our community calls for better, we continue to listen, learn, reflect, and align our actions with our values.



2021 was a year of evolution for our organization. We rebranded from G(irls)20 to Fora, reimagined our programs, and re-evaluated our internal processes to be more reflective of our community. We set ambitious and tangible goals for our organization to be more aligned with our values, and to be a more inclusive organization and workplace.

In 2022, we put new policies into practice. We measured progress and created new commitments. We continue to have important conversations that challenge us, to ensure our programming, policies, communications, and practices are reflective of our values, and of our community.

We are accountable to our community. We want to be transparent and provide clear, informed updates about the changes we are making within our organization.

While we are proud of our progress outlined in this report, we recognize that, although measures have been implemented, critical reflection, ongoing feedback, and continued improvements are necessary as we strive to create an equitable community for all.

There's a lot more work ahead of us.

As conversations around justice continue to evolve, so will we. Alongside young leaders and partners, Fora works to create meaningful change by advocating for the full participation of youth facing discrimination in decision-making spaces at every level.

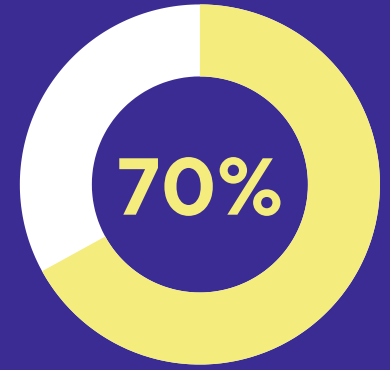
This report is meant to highlight our progress over the past year, reflect on where we fell short, and think ahead to the next year (and beyond) as we set goals and renew commitments, so that we continue to do better.

This is a report back to you, our community, as we reflect on where we can, and must, continue to make progress to build a more equitable, inclusive organization.

Leadership and Staffing

Our 2021 - 2022 Commitments

- Continue to remove barriers in the recruitment process.
- Senior Leadership staff to participate in an equitable recruitment training program to ensure a progressively more equitable approach to hiring.
- Ongoing anti-oppression / anti-racism training delivered to staff and board, to improve knowledge of and increase support to marginalized communities.
- Continue to provide a flexible work environment, offer mental health days, and support other accessibility needs of staff.



Since launching in 2017, 70% of Girls on Boards participants recruited identify as Black, Indigenous, or racialized. Fora also uses an equity lens to ensure diversity in regional representation and family income.

FORA NETWORK FOR CHANGE



Our Progress

Ongoing commitment to removing barriers in the recruitment process, through implementing policies such as:

- Including compensation information on all job postings. We know the salary negotiation process leads to inequitable wage gaps, with Black people and women receiving lower wages than their colleagues. Listing compensation details in job postings is one way to mitigate the racial and gender bias that shows up in salary negotiation.
- Sharing interview questions in advance, to support the preparation process and create a more equitable playing field.
- Extending the average closing date for job postings, to ensure applicants have more time to apply.
- As part of our commitment to equitable representation and access, applicants from Black, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, newcomer, refugee and/or other underserved communities are encouraged to self-identify (if they feel comfortable).
- More outreach to employment spaces that support marginalized applicants, including: Pink Jobs, Indigenous Link, Black Women in Motion, ACBN Canada, and Times Change Job Development.
- Staff and/or board with diverse lived experiences and identities actively participating at all stages of the interview process.

Board recruitment opened to public applications for the first time in the organization's history. Our current [Board of Directors](#) is more reflective of the diverse lived experiences and identities of our community than before.

This year:

- Seven of our nine board members are racialized
- Our board includes three Black women (compared to no Black representation in 2019)
- We welcomed our organization's first non-binary board member
- One of our board members is an immigrant to North America, bringing global lived experience to our governance

We are grateful to have more diverse experiences reflected on our board than ever, and for the important insights they will add to the direction of our organization moving forward.



Delivered all-staff trainings on:

- Indigenous history, practices, and land acknowledgments, facilitated by Amy Desjarlais (Jun 2022)
- “Beyond the Basics: Putting 2SLGBTQIA+ Practices into Action,” facilitated by Fae Johnstone (Sep 2022)

Over the past 12 months, Fora's staff and board team has grown, while also becoming more reflective of our community, in terms of gender, ability, religion, culture, and race.

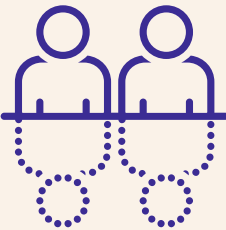
Where We Could Have Done Better

- We could have had clearer processes around recruitment to ensure more consistency in the process and more equity amongst candidates (e.g. scoring structures to be put in place, for objectivity).
- Ensuring new staff members have access to resources and trainings on anti-racism, anti-oppression, and equity as part of the onboarding process, to ensure consistent understanding and accountability among the team.
- While we made important changes to our staff recruitment processes to level the playing field, we recognize that the time it takes to prepare for interviews is significant, and that people should be compensated for their time. This is especially important in the wake of COVID-19, when more individuals facing gender-based discrimination were out of paid work, taking on more unpaid care work at home, and many were working from home while tending to family needs. We recognize this as an area where we could have done better. We are committed to developing a plan in 2023 to incorporate financial compensation as part of the recruitment process in the future.

What's Ahead: Our 2022 – 2023 Commitments



Fora Interim CEO is registered for an equitable recruitment training program (Sep 2022) and will share learnings with the team. Formal processes will be created to improve consistency and equity in all of our recruitment and hiring practices.



Continue to work towards ensuring our staff team and board accurately reflect the diversity in our community, including diversity of race, religion, culture, gender, ability, and more.



Ongoing anti-oppression and anti-racism training to staff and board to improve knowledge of, and increase support to, marginalized communities. This is an ever-evolving process, and we are committed to doing better, year over year. We will also work with facilitators to ensure new team members can access previous all-staff trainings and resources as part of the onboarding process.



Seek ways to prioritize mental health of the team + work/life balance, through initiatives such as providing 10-15 Wellness Days (additional paid days off), granted to staff throughout the year, at the CEO's discretion.

Programs

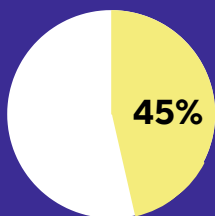
Our 2021 - 2022 Commitments

- Begin researching strategies to reduce power dynamics between ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South,’ as part of our advocacy strategy in 2022, including in communications and programming.
- Redesign the 2022 Global Summit to end the global power imbalances created by the G20, and ensure equitable representation from all global regions.
- Co-design the 2022 Summit programming, recruitment and evaluation with a committee of individuals with diverse regional lived experiences, including Black women, Indigenous women, and women of colour.

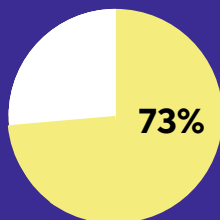
Our Progress

- Began implementing strategies to reduce power dynamics for the 2022 Summit, including providing more downtime after travel, covering technology costs, etc.
- Redesign the [2022 Global Summit](#) to end the global power imbalances created by the G20, and ensure equitable representation from all global regions.
- Co-design the 2022 Summit programming, recruitment and evaluation with a committee of individuals with diverse regional lived experiences, including Black women, Indigenous women, and women of colour.

At our last Global Summit, 45% of Delegates represented regions in the Global South. In 2022, 73% of Delegates represent regions in the Global South.



2020 Global Summit



2022 Global Summit



- Fora's [Get on Board: Masterclass](#) online workshops featured exceptional facilitators with diverse identities and lived experiences, and included participants from 26 countries, with 46% of participants representing Global South regions (Oct 2022).
- Incorporated mandatory anti-oppression training for Girls on Board Young Directors, coaches, and board mentors.
- Fora launched the [Next Level program](#) in response to the COVID-19 disruption to career advancement for the disproportionate number of young women and gender-diverse youth who experienced underemployment in the hospitality and retail sectors. Next Level supported participants in confidence-building and developing transferable skills that are helpful in advancing their careers, alongside providing mentorship and networking opportunities.
- Ensuring speakers, facilitators and contributors are acknowledged and paid equally for their participation by offering stipends to all guest speakers at Fora events.



Where We Could Have Done Better

- Shifting our Global Summit away from the G20 to open the program to participants from around the world led to applicant representation from 80 countries in our first year. While this is a significant improvement in global representation, we recognize we need to conduct increased outreach to ensure more young leaders facing gender-based discrimination are aware of the Global Summit program and have the opportunity to apply. We are creating a more focused outreach plan for 2023, to ensure greater global program accessibility.
- While Fora programs and events are inclusive of gender-diverse participants, we learned throughout the year that there were program design areas that we could have been more intentional with to ensure better inclusivity for 2SLGBTQIA+ program participants. We are committed to learning from this, and to paying closer attention to inclusive program design with the help and guidance of inclusivity experts.

What's Ahead: Our 2022 – 2023 Commitments



Develop official internal policies and guidelines for:

- Hiring facilitators and ensuring content/approach is mindful of our diverse participants
- Recruiting a minimum percentage of program participants from equity-deserving groups



Create and implement a plan to increase local, national, and international targeted partnerships and outreach for Summit and Girls on Board recruitment, to increase diversity among program applicants, event attendees, boards, and coaches.



Develop strong policies and processes for Girls on Boards Young Directors, mentors, and coaches in the event of perceived or real safety issues in their program participation (issues such as verbal abuse, racism, ageism, or other forms of discrimination).



Research opportunities for making the Girls on Boards program bilingual (French).



Facilitate cultural knowledge exchange among program participants that is reflective of unique/diverse cultures within Canada and abroad.



Rename the Girls on Boards program, with the support of a Steering Committee, so that the program name is more reflective and inclusive of the gender-diverse youth also participating in it.

Communications

Our 2021 - 2022 Commitments

- Continue to amplify the voices and lived experience of Black, Indigenous, and women of colour through our communications.
- Collaborate with different communities to mobilize and share Fora's social capital.
- Improve digital, visual, audio, and web accessibility on all communications platforms to increase content accessibility.

Our Progress

Committed to ongoing efforts to centre the voices and lived experiences reflective of our community, and particularly, marginalized members of our community who face gender discrimination, including young leaders who are Black, Indigenous, racialized, part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and young leaders from the Global South.

Examples include:

- Promoting advocacy efforts of Black, Indigenous, and racialized community partners on UN Indigenous People's Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Earth Day, throughout Pride Month and Black History Month
 - Beyond these observances, we have promoted advocacy events held by other organizations by and for racialized communities, and re-shared and re-tweeted initiatives hosted by our community members and likeminded organizations
- Amplifying racialized voices in our newsletter and all social media content, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn
- Inclusion of Land Acknowledgements at workshops and events, and in publications such as our Annual Report for the first time
- Being mindful that the images we share across all communications platforms are reflective of our community, and represent participants of diverse experiences and intersections, whether visible or invisible
- Including (optional) pronouns on nametags and bios, if participants feel comfortable sharing, as a part of honouring expression of gender

Collaborating with young thought-leaders and program participants to create digital content and share resources reflective of our community. Some examples include:

- Published article on [Resources, Opportunities, and Networks for Black Women and Gender-diverse Youth](#) (Feb 2022)
- Facilitated online conversation on Celebrating Black Excellence; conducted interviews and [published blog post](#) about meaningful allyship and uplifting young Black leaders (Feb 2022)
- Conducted interviews and [published a blog](#) on gender equity and climate advocacy (April 2022)
- Facilitated an online forum about Creating 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusive Leadership Spaces (Jul 2022)
- Published report on [Moving Towards a Feminist Economic Recovery after COVID-19](#), published by Ariana Seferiades Prece, in collaboration with the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness (Aug 2022)

“ I'm a firm believer that we cannot achieve environmental change without social change, and **gender equality is a key part of that equation.** ”

Anna-Kay Russell du Toit

Fora community member



In August 2021, as part of the organization’s rebrand, Fora recreated the graphics and colour combinations on website according to guidelines for visual accessibility outlined by the Web Content Accessibility Guide and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. As part of this process, we enhanced digital, audio, and visual accessibility of all external programs, including social media, web, and graphic design. Examples include:

- Testing and amending colour & contrast accessibility in our designs
- Adding captions to video content
- Adding image descriptions text to social media posts

We continued our ongoing collaboration with likeminded organizations and amplifying the voices of organizations and advocates in our community, through initiatives like weekly re-shares of our community’s work, opportunities, events, initiatives, and projects, particularly through utilizing Twitter and Instagram tags and stories.



What We Could Have Done Better

While we shifted our language and communications at Fora to include communities beyond cisgender women, re-designing our spaces to reflect this has been a work-in-progress. As part of this journey, we have had multiple internal workshops, trainings, and ongoing conversations to better unpack and understand what including people who are “gender-diverse” actually means, along with what we need to make sure our space is safe for ALL women, cis and trans.



In the process of this change, there's a lot we could have done better, including:

- Ensuring all speakers at our events understand the importance of using inclusive language when referring to gender (e.g. the differences in language used for people assigned female at birth, vs. socialized as women) to avoid harm as a result of exclusionary language
- Ensuring all panelists, moderators, and guests at events are reminded of the importance of gendering someone correctly, and to not assume gender identity based solely on gender expression
- Creating the space for conversations about the shared experiences that young leaders have faced in leadership as a result of their gender or gender modality, especially including the experiences of trans women and non-binary youth

In addition to our efforts to make a more inclusive space for people across gender identity and expression, we started the journey of understanding what it means to build accessible spaces, in both online and in-person programming.

While we made improvements in our accessibility measures, from graphic design to accessible venues, here's where we could have done better:

- Ensuring there were sign-language interpreters for our in-person event programming
- Ensuring that transcripts are made easily available for all our virtual programming, in addition to software provided closed captioning
- Ensuring we list all event accessibility measures and accommodations clearly on our webpage and in emails ahead of the event, and making staff contact information easy to find, so that anyone with additional access needs can easily reach out to the Fora team

What's Ahead: Our 2022 – 2023 Commitments



Over the next 12 months, re-evaluate the gendered language Fora uses to describe our community, our organization, our participants, and our programs, to ensure it is inclusive and reflective of our community, as well as the community we would like to foster (e.g. the term “young women” is no longer reflective or inclusive of our community, and our spaces are not yet built to fully support participants outside of cisgender women).



Enhance accessibility features on all of Fora's communications, including alt text, accessibility plugins, and open & closed captions across the website, social media, and newsletters.



Conduct an annual accessibility audit to ensure best practices are being implemented on an ongoing basis.



Continue amplifying the voices of our community through sharing events, research, and initiatives our community is advocating for and/or participating in.



Ongoing respectful commitment to accessibility at Fora's in-person events (e.g. a prayer room that is thoughtfully designed; gender neutral & accessible bathrooms which highlight what kind of stalls are inside; ASL interpretation from interpreters who understand & can thoughtfully interpret conversations anti-racism & decolonization).

In Summary

Just as discrimination and oppression are intersectional, justice and liberation are as well.

The Fora staff team and Board of Directors are deeply committed to doing better for our community. Particularly for marginalized members of our community, and especially for those whose experiences are intersectional – including young leaders who are Black, Indigenous and racialized, those who are disabled, and those who have been and continue to be marginalized based on their gender.

Our approach is ever-evolving, and we thank the many young members of our community for their participation and feedback. Their voices will help inform new policies, create better programs, and build a stronger organization, for everyone.

Sincerely,
The Fora Team

