"If diversity is the what, then inclusion is the how"

Diversity is the make-up of an identity

Inclusion is the measure of culture that enables diversity to thrive; it's about...
  o Building intentional and meaningful relationships (note non-system theory which tells us that people feel connected and included when relationships are built on understanding
  o Trust, mutual understanding, and **safety**

Safety (physically, emotionally, and spiritually) is crucial to any meaningful relationship – make sure to create safe spaces for open conversation, reflection, and feedback

How?
  o Reflect on why your organization was created, who are you designing services for, and who is missing in the conversation?
  o Consider building relationships with, and employing, trusted intermediaries (folks connected to the communities you are trying to build relationships with) as means as a first step

And remember...

  "Being present isn't the same thing as having a relationship"

  "Inclusion isn't just about bringing people in, but about drawing on their skills and experiences to create new ways of doing things"

What are some concrete first steps?
  1. **Audit your organizational structures, processes, policies, and cultures/norms.**
     o Are they supporting and benefiting all members of your organization and community? Remember that just because they are working really well for you, doesn't mean others feel the same way. Consider the following...
       • Do your policies support diversity?
       • Do your staff feel safe, listened to, supported?
       • Are the diversities of your staff and communities reflected throughout your entire organization, including middle-upper management, boards, and volunteers?
       • Do you have policies and practices in place to empower you're your staff to grow within the organization?

2. Take the time to understand the difference between structures, processes, policies, and organizational culture.
  - *"I was recruited to be on the board for an organization; was recruited because I represent newcomers, people of colour, LGBTQ2S+ folks...I did not feel comfortable being on that board though because I didn't feel like my voice was being heard and didn't feel like I was able to contribute the way I wanted to contribute...ended up resigning from the board."*
    - This is an example of how an organization might have all of the proper structures, processes, and policies in place, but organizational culture and meeting norms have prohibited inclusion
  - How to address this?
    - Practice active listening
    - Be willing to receive critical feedback and be willing to learn from and address that feedback
    - Learn from your diverse staff – ask them what is and isn't working from them, if they feel supported, how they might want to be engaged differently.

3. Work on actively inviting people with diverse backgrounds into your organization. Here are four ways to do this:
  - Be more intentional in recruitment processes
    - Consider if your language, and/or the opportunity itself, is inviting to diverse communities
    - Build relationships with community leaders and connectors (and ask for their help to spread the word about volunteer and job opportunities)
    - Don't be passive in your recruitment; call community centres, post opportunities on different social media and website platforms to reach different audiences (I.e., What's App, organizational message boards and websites, etc.)
    - Look at who is connected to your organization right now – are there any volunteers, partners, clients/community members who might like to be invited to apply?
  - Consider trying a "blind interview" process to eliminate any unconscious biases
    - Have HR department (or non-hiring committee member) reassign each resume a number, removing names and other identifying features from applications
    - Hiring committee reviews each resume with no knowledge of applicants
    - Conduct interviews over the phone/by video chat (with cameras off) to ensure applicants are chosen for their skills and experiences, rather than on identifying features such as race, gender, age, ability.
  - Challenge expectations and norms – consider hiring based on potential, rather than simply on educational certifications. Consider the following:
    - Do we need applicants to have a "Canadian" work experience?
    - Can volunteer and life experience be equated to job experience?
    - Can we build an applicant's skills through professional development and mentorship, allowing them to grow into their role?
  - Be willing to try new things. The pandemic has introduced new models of working that many of us hadn't considered in the past, including remote and hybrid work models. We know that these models have increased the accessibility of work to many people, mainly those from diverse backgrounds. Instead of rushing back to in-office work models, consider continuing remote and hybrid opportunities to allow folks to participate in work they might otherwise be unable to participate in.

4. **And most importantly**, **remember that folks with diverse backgrounds have more to lose than we do when it comes to speaking up**; be willing to reach out and speak together.

Additional Resources
The Intersectional Organizational Assessment by AASIA
A Toolkit for Inclusion
Organizational EDI Assessment Tool and Framework
Inclusive Event Planning
The Loudest Duck: Moving Beyond Diversity While Embracing Differences to Achieve Success at Work
Equity-Centered Community Design: An Advocacy Model
Five steps to becoming an advocate: A TED Talk by Joseph R Campbell