



GUIDELINES TO ACHIEVING INCLUSIVITY

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Q. Can we still sing songs that use the word "God"?

A. Of course. Being inclusive does not mean that we have to stop singing the songs we enjoy. It simply means that we have to be flexible and open to adapting our favourite songs to make sure that everyone can sing along!

Take a moment to ask the inclusivity assurance questions before choosing a song to sing, in order to ensure it is appropriate for all the girls in your Unit.

The Brownie program book, page 27, for example, already has a more inclusive version of the Brownie closing. If you work with older girls, try singing "good night" at the end of Taps, instead of the traditional "God is nigh". As long as you are respectful of the beliefs and values of all your Unit Members, you should continue to enjoy the Guiding tradition of music and song.

Q. Can we still have Graces, Guides Own, and Reflections?

A. Spirituality is an important part of the Girl Guide experience. In fact, all Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting organizations around the world must ensure their programming incorporates an element of spirituality in order to be recognized as a member of WAGGGS. However, in a multicultural country like Canada, spirituality is an extremely individual concept.

Like our songs, Graces, Guides Own, and Reflections are all important traditions within GGC. Please continue to enjoy these, but ensure that they are inclusive.

When planning unit meetings, celebrations, or other activities, ask each of the girls to choose passages, poems, or songs that speak to her sense of spirituality. Then, take the time to share everyone's unique selections.

Q. Can we still hold meetings/events in churches?

A. Yes. More and more today, community groups are facing difficulties in finding space to hold meetings and events, and GGC is no exception. Our organization has a long tradition of meeting in

religious facilities, and if this is the most inexpensive and accessible place in which to hold your meetings, you should continue to do so.

However, we need to recognize that we may unintentionally create barriers to certain members of a community when we hold meetings in religious facilities. Girls who practice other religions, or those who do not have any religious affiliations, may feel uncertain about entering a religious facility to attend a meeting or event. Meeting in a religious facility may also lead some to wrongly believing that Guiding is only open to girls and women of one religious affiliation. We also need to be cognizant that not all religious facilities are accessible to those with physical disabilities.

The best way to overcome this is to ensure everyone understands you are only using the religious facility as a meeting place, and not for religious purposes. Many other community groups use these facilities for their activities without the worry of being viewed as religious activities. You could brainstorm with your girls when planning meetings, and challenge them to come up with activities or events that take them outside of the meeting hall. This will increase your visibility in the community and help demonstrate to non-members that your Unit is inclusive and welcoming to girls from all backgrounds.

Over the long term, Unit Guiders should consider opportunities to move their Units to new, non-religious, affordable, and accessible locations, when they arise.

Q. Can we still celebrate Holidays, like Valentine's, Hallowe'en, and Christmas, in our Units?

A. Of course you can, but it is important that you are being respectful and inclusive of the special holidays and religious celebrations observed by all of our girl and adult Members. Holidays and special celebrations are a great time for members of different cultures and religions to share their traditions with others, and for others to show their appreciation and respect for those traditions. It is also a chance to reaffirm the Guide Law of respecting others.

Here are some suggested activities your Unit could do to celebrate these special times in the year:

- Ask the girls to plan a holiday party in December, and have them showcase their cultures and traditions through food, song, dance, etc.
- Have a Winter Carnival. Play games outside in the snow, do winter-themed crafts, and celebrate our chilly country!
- Celebrate spring! Go to a local farm and check out all the new spring arrivals. From new seedlings and buds to baby animals, there's so much to see and learn about!

Q. All the girls in my Unit are the same. Why do I need to be more inclusive?

A. While your girls may appear to come from similar backgrounds, you might be surprised to find out how unique each of their experiences and interests are. While one girl might be loud and boisterous, another might be shy and quiet. While one girl might have to take care of her younger siblings after school every day, another might be an only child and is alone until her parents come home. While one girl gets to eat out at a fancy restaurant, another girl might wonder if there will be any dinner at all tonight.

Through GGC programming, we have a great opportunity to teach the girls to be welcoming of others, and to take the time to appreciate our differences while learning more about our own personal interests.

The best way to ensure inclusivity in the short term is to have a balanced program that includes outings into the community. Brainstorm with your girls when planning meetings, and challenge them to come up with activities or events outside of the meeting hall. As you increase your visibility in the community you may attract more members and it will also demonstrate to non-members that your Unit is inclusive and welcoming to girls from all backgrounds.

Q. How can I find out more information to help me develop a more inclusive Guiding program and calendar?

A. Girl Guides of Canada will be continually monitoring and updating its resources to assist Guiders in developing more inclusive programming and practices. In addition, a National Diversity/Inclusivity Specialist position is being recruited to assist Guiding Members with their questions and to provide expert advice on a go-forward basis. GGC welcomes input and sharing from all Unit Guiders. If you or your Unit have developed best practices, please share them with others. Let's work together to be more inclusive! Send your ideas to inclusivity@girlguides.ca.

Glossary

As we begin this transformation to a more inclusive Guiding experience, a number of key terms need clarification. Below are the definitions of words according to Girl Guides of Canada:

Discrimination: The denial of opportunity to an individual or a group to fully participate in an activity, event, program, or service on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, political beliefs, socio-economic status, health related status, sexual orientation, marital status or any other grounds enumerated in the human rights legislation of the jurisdiction in which the individuals are located. In GGC, this may take the form of assumptions regarding religious beliefs that result in imposing certain prayers or readings, or holding activities in particular religious locations.

Equity: Treating all girls and women with respect, acknowledging that individual differences exist, and that both are considered and accommodated. For GGC, this may require you to explore the personal situations of each girl or woman to ensure that you are giving consideration to heritage, culture, or any life circumstances, and making appropriate accommodations.

Diversity: Inclusion of all girls and women regardless of colour, culture, beliefs, disability, religious practices (or not), socio-economic status, or any other life or personal circumstance where the individual is valued for their contribution. For GGC this will mean reconsidering the continuation of traditional practices or ways of doing things and thinking somewhat differently about how you might offer a more open and inclusive program that is welcoming to all.

Inclusive: Taking alternative actions that will ensure Girl Guides of Canada provides a welcoming environment where all girls and women will feel safe, valued, and welcomed for who they are and for what they can contribute.