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THE PROJECT TO END  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Tomorrow's Men Today:  
Canadian Men's Insights on  
Engaging Men and Boys in  
Creating a More Gender Equal  
Future**

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**The views of authors do not necessarily represent the views of  
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## Preamble

The authors would like to take this opportunity to situate themselves in relation to this research. First, both of us identify as feminists and have worked with feminist issues such as domestic and sexual violence for over two decades. We sit at the intersection of academia and community and have drawn on this experience to inform this report; the report reflects this context in that its chief aim is usability. Second, we believe that gender inequality is inextricably linked with rates of violence against women, and that these areas must not be siloed in moving the work forward with men and boys.

This research report came out of Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence ([www.preventdomesticviolence.ca](http://www.preventdomesticviolence.ca)), which is located at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary. The purpose of Shift is to conduct and mobilize primary prevention research to empower others to create the social conditions that will prevent violence. Since 2011, we have focused our research program on engaging and mobilizing men and boys in violence prevention and gender equality. We believe that violence and inequalities are learned, reinforced and socialized within our sociocultural environments and institutions (e.g., family, friends, school, workplaces, media, policies, legislation, etc.) and this belief informs this research.

As concepts and definitions are important to this work, we created a glossary of terms on page seven for the reader to review before reading the report. However, there are a few key terms used in the report that warrant further explanation. The first is the term “pro-feminist”. Flood, a leading global expert on engaging men and boys, explains that, “to be feminist or pro-feminist is, in brief, to be guided by principles of gender equality and social justice”.<sup>1</sup> The “pro” part of pro-feminism involves being informed by feminism and doing work alongside, or in collaboration with, women and women’s organizations.<sup>2</sup> Although sometimes contentious, the term is typically used to describe men involved in feminist work. We chose to use this term in both the recruitment process and throughout the report because it is easy to understand and expresses the principles used by men doing gender equality work in Canada.

Another term used throughout this report is “Indigenous”. We recognize and respect the great diversity of Indigenous peoples throughout Canada and are aware that the Federal Government has committed to the usage of “First Nations, Inuit, and Métis” to reflect this diversity. We chose to use the singular term “Indigenous” to protect the identity of those who participated in the interviews.

A third term is gender. Gender is “the manner in which we express our identities to others and it is informed by our thoughts, feelings and choices regarding how we move through the world around us. Gender is shaped by cultural and social influences and our sense of self, and is a deeply personal and complex experience.”<sup>3</sup> We believe gender is socially-constructed and learned through collective socialization. Often gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man in a given context.<sup>4</sup> We recognize that there is a spectrum of gender. The intention of this research is to not reinforce the gender-binary but rather to hear specifically from male-identified pro-feminist gender equality advocates.

We write this report in the hopes of contributing to a national dialogue on how we can both better support male leaders already engaged in gender equality work, and socialize more men and boys to get involved from coast to coast to coast. We believe that achieving gender equality will require a comprehensive approach that targets social and cultural norms, structures and institutions, and policies and practices, while simultaneously building the will and skills of individuals. This means “we” (the collective we) need to create opportunities and environments where all genders can learn, adapt, and change, knowing mistakes will be made along the way. With the current global and national challenges ahead, it will take all of us, collectively, to stop violence against women and achieve true and lasting gender equality.

Finally, we recognize this work is fraught with complexities, may challenge our values and ideologies, and is calling on men to dismantle a system that privileges them over others. Efforts to move this work forward must be mindful of this tension and ensure that we are engaging and mobilizing men and boys in ways that do not reinforce or recreate gendered power inequities.

This report is written in the spirit of uniting all genders as we work towards moving the needle on gender equality in Canada.

In Solidarity,

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*“Men are hungry for it, and I think we want to figure out our place in this and #Metoo has amplified that. Our analysis of gender-based violence is that although men are in a position of power and privilege and we benefit in certain ways from that position, it is not a system that is kind to all men, or equally benefits all men. The cost of maintaining power and privilege can be a source of pain, or discomfort at the least, and so lots of guys are ready for something different, or already doing something different and just need to find other people who are expressing that masculinity in positive ways. So there is that appetite that I see everywhere we go, like I never see a quiet room where guys are not interested in having these conversations.” (Participant #9)*

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from a national qualitative research study involving 33 diverse pro-feminist men engaged in leading gender equality work with men and boys across Canada. The purpose of this research was twofold: first, it sought to reveal motivations and experiences of pro-feminist men currently leading gender equality work in Canada; and second, to determine how we can attract, invite, encourage, and support other men and boys to get involved and mobilized to advance gender equality in Canada.

## Methods & Recruitment

Following a cursory review of the academic literature on engaging men and boys in gender equality work,<sup>5</sup> an index outlining eight indicators and 42 examples of gender equality practices was developed to assist with recruitment (see Appendix 2). Via snowball sampling, we contacted over 400 feminist individuals, organizations, and male allies to help us identify men who were championing gender equality in one of the ways identified by the index. In total, 122 men were identified, 52 were invited to participate, and 33 men were interviewed based on the nature of their gender equality work, the sector in which the work occurred, and geographical location. In addition, the authors used an intersectional lens purposefully targeting men for representation from:

- Across provinces and territories (urban and rural)
- Gender and Sexually Diverse, male-identified people
- Religious and culturally-diverse groups
- Indigenous groups
- Younger and older adults (ages 18 and up)
- Across sectors (private, public, civil society)
- Both official language groups (English and French)

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and a qualitative analysis was conducted. Once the preliminary analysis was completed, key themes were then presented to an expert panel consisting of seven academics and practitioners in an effort to triangulate the data and further the analysis. The following findings are based on 33 interviews with male-identified gender equality advocates and seven experts from across Canada. This study was approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.

## Findings

**What Motivated Men to Get Involved in Leading Gender Equality Work?** Findings revealed that the vast majority of the men who were interviewed had a sensitizing experience where they first became attuned to issues of gender inequality and gender-based violence. For some this was through personal experiences with oppression and exclusion such as homophobia, transphobia, racism, and the stigma associated with having a mental illness. For others, it was through experiencing abuse and violence as a child, or hearing disclosures of violence from others. Fatherhood was also identified as a key transformative time for some of the respondents, as they began to worry about the future of their children. Commitment to social justice, influence by female family members, in particular mothers, and female mentorship by peers, bosses, and colleagues were identified as continuing influencers in men's lives.

**What Challenges and Barriers do Men Face when Leading Gender Equality Work?** For men who lead gender equality work with men and boys several challenges were identified. The most prominent barrier was lack of direct funding for their work. Respondents identified lack of capacity, legitimization and buy-in, and organizational and institutional barriers as additional key challenges to their work. Several men identified some tension in leading gender equality work specifically with feminists and women's organizations, identifying language and approaches were sometimes in conflict. Finally, many described feeling isolated and burnt out largely due to lack of resources and capacity.

**Why Don't the Majority of Men and Boys Engage in Gender Equality?** This research revealed there are several reasons why men and boys tend not to engage in gender equality in day-to-day activities, conversations, programs, and advocacy. Male socialization and privilege were identified as key challenges. The men explained that the current dominant social construction of masculinity confines men to certain behaviours and actions that do not include asking for help, showing empathy, and self-reflection/growth, resulting in a lack of interest or engagement with gender equality issues. Other reasons identified included fear of being judged or shamed, of losing power, and because current constructions of gender equality tend to reflect feminist and women-centred concerns resulting in apathy and disconnection. Male youth lack positive roles models and face social/peer pressure to conform to gender stereotypes. The participants suggested that male youth need to be given opportunities to explore gender socialization, and many research participants argued boys are "hungry" for these conversations.

**How Might we Better Engage Men and Boys?** Respondents were asked how to increase general engagement, and the largest theme identified included building a new narrative that invited men and boys into the work. Suggestions included focusing on positive aspects of masculinities, delivering content with empathy in a nurturing environment, along with meeting men and boys where they are at in the change process. Men and boys require safe spaces to engage in these conversations, and need community leaders and gender equality champions, role models, and mentorship. The school system was identified as a natural place for work with male youth and boys. Strategies need to embed a feminist, intersectional approach that includes multiple, diverse



worldviews. Gender equality work should target natural entry points such as fatherhood, fraternities, and sports teams. Efforts to raise awareness and educate men and boys should occur in workplaces and education settings. Relationship is foundational to much of this work. Leveraging the workplace and linking with men's health issues were also identified as ways to move the work forward.

**What are the Benefits and Costs for Men Leading Gender Equality Work?** Men interviewed identified several costs and benefits to doing gender equality work. The most common benefit described was personal fulfillment and growth. Improved relationships with family and new friendships with other like-minded men were also identified. As far as costs, interviewees stated the most common was stress and burnout due to lack of resources and isolation. Vicarious trauma was also mentioned, as were costs in terms of income and career progress. Social exclusion and backlash were also experienced by several respondents.

**Ways to Better Support Men and Boys Leading Gender Equality Work in Canada.** Respondents described what would help forward their gender equality work. The most prominent theme was increased and sustainable funding. Investment would allow those working to hire staff, increase capacity, and scale programs. Men indicated they needed national alignment on men and boys' gender equality work through a formal strategy or national working group or coalition. A network or formalized support system was also identified as critical to advancing this area. This space could be used to combat isolation and to work through ideas, tensions, receive support, and problem solve with like-minded men.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings from this research and supported through academic literature, there are five broad recommendations on how to better engage men and boys as allies, partners, leaders, and co-beneficiaries in advancing gender equality. First, investments from governments and funders must be made in those pro-feminist men already leading gender equality work in Canada; second, governments, non-government organizations, workplaces and civil society need to create more opportunities and experiences for men and boys to deepen their knowledge and awareness on gender equality; third, all sectors need to develop resources and supports that are easy to access; fourth, governments, institutions and funders need to reinforce gender equality in settings in which we live, learn, work, play, and worship; and fifth, governments need to bring pro-feminist men and feminist leaders together to continue to advance this field.

## Conclusion

There are some cautions in this work moving forward. Practice and experience has taught us that mobilizing a socially-privileged group to work toward dismantling a problem largely perpetuated from within its own ranks is complex work. Efforts to move this work forward must be mindful of this tension and ensure that we are engaging and mobilizing men and boys in ways that do not reinforce or recreate gendered power inequities. That means funding must go towards initiatives

that are explicit about how they are promoting/advancing gender equality for women, how they are gender transformative, and demonstrate they are resisting the societal reflex of patriarchy. Also, as is evident in our study, the pro-feminist, male-identified movement in Canada is still largely led by cisgender, White men – the very group that benefits most from gender equality work (receiving compensation and accolades). Ensuring an intersectional approach is applied at every level of policy, investment and practice along with ensuring partnerships with feminists and women’s organizations going forward will be key to advancing gender equality in Canada.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Ally:** “An ‘ally’ can be defined as a person ‘who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through the support of, and as an advocate with and for, an oppressed population’.”<sup>6</sup>

**Feminism:** A term that means different things for different people. For us, we use the term to describe a political movement that challenges institutionalized male dominance. We also agree with bell hooks who says that feminism is a “movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression”.<sup>7</sup>

**Gender:** Gender refers to the “social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female. Gender is socially-constructed and learned through socialization. Often gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man in a given context.”<sup>8</sup>

**Gender and Sexually Diverse People:** “Are those persons who constitute a minority population due to differences in their sexual orientations and/or gender identities. Groups characterized as sexual minorities across sex, sexual and gender differences include lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transsexuals, intersexuals, transgendered, and Two Spirit Aboriginals. Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects sexual minorities against discrimination in Canadian culture and society.”<sup>9</sup>

**Gender Bias:** “is a preference or prejudice toward one gender over the other. Bias can be conscious or unconscious, and may manifest in many ways, both subtle and obvious.”<sup>10</sup>

**Gender Equality:** “Refers to equal chances or opportunities for groups of women and men to access and control social, economic, and political resources, including protection under the law (such as health services, education, and voting rights). It is also known as equality of opportunity, or formal equality. Gender equality is often used interchangeably with gender equity, but the two refer to different, complementary strategies that are needed to reduce gender-based health inequities.”<sup>11</sup>

**Gender Equity:** “More than formal equality of opportunity, gender equity refers to the different needs, preferences, and interests of women and men. This may mean that different treatment is needed to ensure equality of opportunity. This is often referred to as substantive equality (or equality of results) and requires considering the realities of women’s and men’s lives”.<sup>12</sup>

**Gender Identity:** An individual’s own sense of maleness, femaleness, multi-gender, or transgender.<sup>13</sup>

**Gender Norms:** “Gender is not a synonym for sex. It refers to the widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate male and female behaviour, characteristics, and roles. It is a social and cultural construct that differentiates women from men and defines the ways in which women and men interact with each other. Gender is a culture-specific construct – there are significant differences in what women and men can or cannot do in one culture as compared to another. But what is fairly consistent across cultures is that there is always a distinct difference between women’s and men’s roles, access to productive resources, and decision-making authority.”<sup>14</sup>

**Gender Roles:** The culturally-prescribed behaviours and traits that dictate how males and females should act.<sup>15</sup>

**Gender Socialization:** Gender socialization involves learning the social norms around what a society deems to be appropriate for males and females.<sup>16</sup> “Males are expected to learn to ‘act like a man’ –

they are trained or socialized into masculinity. Females are expected to learn to ‘act like a woman’ – they are trained or socialized into femininity.”<sup>17</sup> Now, of course we know that gender is not binary; however, talking about this binary (and the ways in which it is problematic) is an important step to examine gender stereotypes and gender norms.

**Gender Spectrum:** The range of multiple standpoints, such as female and male, in addition to other socially viable, other-gendered positions.<sup>18</sup>

**Gender Transformative Approaches:** A gender transformative approach involves a policy, process, program and/or strategy that actually helps to transform power relations between men and women, addressing the drivers of inequality.<sup>19</sup>

**Healthy Masculinities:** Healthy masculinities refer to the development of beliefs, attitudes, and norms about masculinity that promote GE, non-violence, and social and emotional competencies. This involves: 1) expanding traditional notions of masculinity to include a wider range of human qualities and experiences (e.g., nurturing, care-taking, being vulnerable); and 2) challenging aspects of traditionally defined masculinities that reinforce existing power dynamics and limit the potential for gender equality.<sup>20</sup>

**Intersectionality:** Intersectionality in research “emphasize[s] the need to consider complex interactions between structures of power and oppression and interconnected aspects of group identity and social location.”<sup>21</sup>

**Misogyny:** “The internalized hatred of women that manifests itself in subtle and unsubtle ways across the modern world.”<sup>22</sup>

**Power:** “Includes the ability to make decisions about one’s life and the capacity to influence and/or affect the desired goals. All relationships are affected by the exercise of power, which in turn is profoundly shaped by social identities, including gender, race, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, nationality, etc.”<sup>23</sup>

**Patriarchy:** “A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women”.<sup>24</sup>

**Privilege:** The advantages that come from being a member of a dominant group (based on gender, race, class, ability, or sexuality). Invisibility of privilege is the idea that those who are dominant in a society may not be aware of their dominance or special status. This invisibility of privilege results in people being unaware of the extent of discrimination and, as a result, may become angry when confronted with evidence or assertions of racism, classism, sexism, etc.<sup>25</sup>

**Pro-feminist Men:** Are defined as men who actively support feminism and its efforts to bring about the political, economic, cultural, personal, and social equality of women (and all genders) with men. “Feminism is defined as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression”.<sup>26</sup>

**Toxic Masculinities:** While not generally well-defined in the literature, toxic masculinities refers to those “characteristics of masculinity that create vulnerabilities in males toward unhealthy behaviours, depression, and violence against themselves and/or others”.<sup>27</sup> Toxic masculinity is currently used as “an umbrella term for various types of harmful behaviour linked to masculinity”<sup>28</sup> and male norms that “serve to foster domination, devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence”.<sup>29</sup>

**Transformative Justice:** “Transformative justice is an approach to justice that investigates the crime, as well as the context in which the crime occurred, to uncover and address oppression.”<sup>30</sup>

## 1.0 Introduction

Gender equality (GE) has long been a key feminist objective. However, the movement towards equality has traditionally been viewed as a “women’s issue” with men situated as the problem.<sup>31</sup> Increasingly however, the important role that men and boys play in reducing gender inequality is gaining worldwide recognition<sup>32</sup> as it is deeply tied to social constructions of masculinity and gender-based violence.<sup>33</sup> The shift towards engaging men as part of the solution to achieve GE stems from our evolving understanding that patriarchy also negatively affects men.<sup>34</sup> While many men and boys benefit directly both formally and informally from gender inequalities and patriarchal structures, they also pay significant costs, especially in relation to their emotional and physical health.<sup>35</sup>

While the importance of working with men and boys to forward goals of GE are apparent, research on this topic in the Global North is fairly limited.<sup>36</sup> Much of what we know about engaging men and boys in GE work is based on extensive research from the European Union<sup>37</sup> and the Global South<sup>38</sup>. Thus, there is a call for greater understanding and documentation of how men and boys are responding to the emerging GE agenda both globally and within our own national context.<sup>39</sup>

Canada is committed to advancing GE through the empowerment and protection of women and girls and more recently via the engagement of men and boys.<sup>40</sup> In their 2018 Budget, the Government of Canada made an explicit commitment to invest 1.8 million dollars to develop a federal strategy to engage men and boys as partners to advance GE. This strategy is linked directly to Canada’s Gender Results Framework which aims to track how Canada is performing over six key areas critical to achieving GE: education and skill development, economic participation and prosperity, leadership and democratic participation, gender-based violence and access to justice, poverty reduction, health and wellbeing, and GE around the world.<sup>41</sup>

As Canada lacks national representative or qualitative data on Canadian men and GE work, this study aims to address this gap and raise Canada’s profile as a leader in the GE movement. The purpose of this research study was twofold: first, it sought to reveal motivations and experiences of pro-feminist men currently leading GE work in Canada; and second, determine how we can attract, invite, encourage, and support other men and boys to get engaged and mobilized.

This report starts with a brief overview of the methods used, followed by a presentation of the research findings. It closes with recommendations for the Government of Canada and other key stakeholders on ways we can better engage and mobilize men and boys to advance GE from coast to coast to coast.

## 2.0 Methods

This section provides a brief overview of the methods used in the study. For a more in-depth description, please see Appendix 1.

## 2.1 Research Objectives

The research objectives were as follows:

1. To inform the development of an engagement strategy for men and boys that promotes equality and pilots innovative, targeted approaches to addressing inequality by contributing in-depth, individual accounts that may complement specific consultation activities, such as group discussions, and guide methodological approaches;
2. To advance knowledge by contributing to developing a more nuanced understanding of masculinities in Canadian society by seeking life experiences of those men who resisted established gender-based hierarchies and prejudices despite these still being normalized and widely accepted in many spheres of Canadian life; and
3. To understand the social conditions (or the environments) that supported the men to become GE advocates.

## 2.2. Research Questions

The study focused on four research questions:

1. What are the views and life experiences of those men who have resisted established gender-based hierarchies and prejudices, despite these still being normalized and widely accepted in many spheres of Canadian life?
2. How the advancement of women's equality could involve men and boys based on real life accounts and reflections? For example, what has motivated or inspired the interviewees to stray from the 'norm'? What relevant lessons could inspire new generations?
3. What motivators need to be considered when encouraging men and boys to take an active role in the GE movement and to commit to cultural, social, and regional inclusiveness?
4. What social conditions support men to become GE advocates?

## 2.3 Theoretical Approaches to Research Project

Positive deviance, intersectionality, and pragmatism were three theories that informed the research design. Briefly stated, a positive deviance approach focuses on the segment of a group or population that are resisting typical norms.<sup>42</sup> For example, this study recruited men who are pro-feminist, and working in Canada to advance GE and stop violence against women. These men are challenging and disrupting individual and institutional norms that reinforce violence against women and gender inequalities. Intersectionality is a conceptual tool that is used to examine “the interlocking effects of race, class, gender, and sexuality, highlighting the ways in which categories of identity and structures of inequality are mutually constituted and defy separation into discrete categories of analysis”<sup>43</sup>. To put this concept into action, the study focused on recruiting men from

diverse experiences and social locations (income, culture, geographic location) and aimed to understand how their intersectional experiences inform their work with men and boys. And, finally, pragmatism is an applied approach to research that replaces traditional concepts such as epistemology and methodology,<sup>44</sup> and is instead guided by the research question and the best methods to answering the research question.<sup>45</sup> For the authors, this approach was condensed to a few basic principles: “pay attention, listen and watch, be open, think about what you hear and see, document systematically, and apply what you learn”.<sup>46</sup> Adherence to these fundamental principles – independent of whether one is committed to a theoretical orientation – is the crux of sound qualitative work and is reflective of the pragmatic nature of this approach.

## 2.4 Methods and Recruitment

A cursory literature review<sup>47</sup> was conducted to determine the state of knowledge on engaging men and boys in GE work, and to identify similar qualitative studies from Canada, the United States, and Australia. This literature was used to inform the research design and study questions. Snowball sampling (a recruitment technique where current contacts or study participants are used to help identify other ones, like a rolling snowball) was used to assist in identifying men who occupy or occupied positions of influence and/or authority (formal or informal) and who, through their conduct and actions, have demonstrated a genuine commitment to GE as well as respect and recognition of women’s rights. With this in mind, critical questions were considered, such as: what does a commitment to GE look like in practice? What conduct and what actions would this entail? And how will we determine if a man is truly committed to this work? In order to address these important questions, we concluded that men must be engaged in this work in public, and in observable and confirmable ways. To help determine this, we developed an index that identified eight indicators and 42 examples of GE practices to assist us in the recruitment process (See Appendix 2). The index was developed using those outlined by the Government of Canada<sup>48</sup>, as well as by international and academic literature. We then consulted with one Indigenous leader/scholar<sup>i</sup> to review the index. The index was developed to fit within the study objectives, and many indicators and practices have been adapted to reflect concrete and observable GE actions and behaviours. They were part of the recruitment materials and provided a way for men, or those who recommended men, to determine if they were appropriate for this study.

We reached out via email to our network of over 400 feminist individuals, organizations, and male allies (private, not-for-profit, public, and civil society) across the country to help us identify men who were championing GE in at least one of the ways identified by the GE practices identified in Appendix 2. A rationale for the nomination was also requested based on a description of the man’s

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<sup>i</sup> The interpretation comes from a Métis woman who has worked for 25 years in the Calgary area that is home to the signatories of Treaty 7. The area is also home to the Métis Nation Region 3. The process of translation comes from work with local Elders or Old People from the area who help guide and inform social programming. From this perspective, the indicators are the best reflection of the work of the Indigenous social services communities, being paralleled by local Elders or Old People. This being said, the perspective reflects the local environment of Calgary.



GE work. Our networks identified 122 men in Canada.

Of all the nominations, men were selected based on the nature of their GE work, the sector in which the work occurred, and geographical location. Using an intersectional lens, we purposefully targeted men for representation from:

- Across provinces and territories (urban and rural)
- Gender and Sexually-Diverse, male-identified people
- Religious and culturally diverse groups
- Indigenous groups
- Younger and older adults (ages 18 and up)
- Across sectors (private, public, civil society)
- Both official language groups (English and French)

In total, 52 men were invited to participate in the study. Thirty-three invitees responded with interest and were later interviewed; 17 did not respond; and one declined to be interviewed. While there is no standard sample size for qualitative studies,<sup>49</sup> this sample size was deemed appropriate and satisfactory because we reached data saturation and obtained a broad representation of Canadian society.

Using a general interview guide, interviews occurred over the phone and lasted 60-90 minutes. They were audio taped, subsequently transcribed, and then sent back to the participants for final review in a process called member-checking. Seventeen men responded to the member-checking process. All transcripts were finalized and uploaded into NVivo (a qualitative data analysis computer software package), and qualitative analysis was undertaken using a coding framework. A preliminary coding scheme with an intersectional lens was developed from the interview data by first previewing the first few transcripts in consideration with the research questions and objectives. Following this, transcripts were reviewed and coded accordingly, adding to the coding scheme as new themes emerged.<sup>50</sup>

Once preliminary analysis was conducted on 28 interviews, key themes were then presented to an expert panel consisting of seven academics and practitioners from across Canada who were identified through the aforementioned recruitment process. Following the presentation of the preliminary findings via the Zoom online platform, the panel was invited to comment on general reflections on the data and/or missing concepts, in an effort to triangulate the data and further the analysis. Triangulation in qualitative research is a term used to denote practices that enhance research accuracy and credibility.<sup>51</sup> Triangulation encompasses comparing multiple perspectives, sources, or methods to corroborate the analysis and build credibility of the study.<sup>52</sup>

The following report is based on 33 interviews with individual men, and the expert panel comprised of seven men. This study was approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board.



### 3.0 The Participants

This section provides an overview of the 33 men who participated in the study.

#### 3.1 Geographical Location

The men who participated in this study had wide geographical representation from across the country. The table below illustrates where men were located:

Regions	Provinces	Participants
Central Canada	Ontario	9 men
	Quebec	2 men
Prairie Provinces	Alberta Saskatchewan Manitoba	8 men
West Coast	British Columbia	6 men
Atlantic Provinces	Nova Scotia New Brunswick Newfoundland and Labrador Prince Edward Island	5 men
Northern Territories	Nunavut The Northwest Territories Yukon Territory	3 men
<b>Total</b>		<b>33 men</b>

#### 3.2 Diversity

The research team endeavoured to include diverse experiences and perspectives through targeted recruitment. The 33 men who were interviewed represented the following perspectives:

- Twenty men identified as White/Caucasian/Settler
- Six men identified they had immigrated to Canada at some point in their life
- Five men identified as Indigenous/Métis
- Five men identified as Gay or Transgender
- Four men identified as being African Canadian or Carribean Canadian
- Three men identified as Indian Canadian
- One man identified as European Canadian

In terms of age range, the sample had a close representation across four age categories:

- Six men were 18-30 years
- Eight men were 31-40 years

- Nine men were 41-50 years
- Eight men were 51-60 years
- Two men were 61+

Length of time engaged in GE work also ranged for the participants, with the most being 3-5 years:

- Under 2 years (N=3)
- 3-5 years (N=12)
- 6-10 years (N=10)
- 11-15 years (N=0)
- 16-20 years (N=2)
- Over 21 years (N=6)

### **3.3 Sector where Gender Equality Work Occurs**

The participants were asked in which sector their GE work takes place: public (government, health, education), private (business, finance), or non-profit/community. Almost half of the respondents (N=15) indicated their GE work crossed all sectors. For those who indicated only one sector, eight identified working in a non-profit/community context. Examples here include working within one's cultural community, with a particular non-profit organization, or at the community/grassroots level. Seven men indicated they worked in the public sector. In some cases, this involved working in the local school system, and in others it involved large public systems such as policing and military. Finally, three participants focus their work in the private sector.

### **3.4 Focus of Gender Equality Work**

The focus of the participants' GE work predominately fell almost equally across three categories: preventing and stopping violence against women (this would include focused work on sexual assault or gender-based violence), examining gender socialization, stereotypes, and healthy masculinity, or GE generally, such as advancing GE in leadership positions within a company or system.

Descriptions of current GE work led to the identification of common approaches. The most common form of GE work occurred in an educational capacity involving training, workshops, and conferences. This was followed not only by facilitation of group work predominately with young men in the school and university setting, but also with adult men through services or in the community. Seven men discussed mentorship efforts involving empowerment and leadership skills with youth and seven identified media and public awareness campaigns as a key component of their approach. Six explained their work involved key partnerships with feminist or civil society organizations, and/or a network approach. This included descriptions of international partnerships with like-minded organizations, a network of chapter organizations across the country, and partnering with local women's organizations during key activities such as 16 Days to End Gender-Based Violence. At the grassroots level, a network of diverse men who come together around GE issues was also described. A few men described that their work focused on changing culture, often

in the context of a system or company, while others emphasized applying an intersectional approach as important. Indigenous ceremonies, rites of passage, and connection to reconciliation were identified by a few respondents as well.

## 4.0 Main Findings

This section presents the main findings from the qualitative interviews with 33 men and the expert panel of seven participants. It is broken into seven primary themes: 1) How work with men and boys fosters GE work for women; 2) What motivates men to get involved in leading GE work; 3) What challenges or barriers men face when leading GE work; 4) Why men and boys do not engage in GE work; 5) How we can better engage other men and boys in this work; 6) Benefits and costs of men leading GE work; and 7) Ways we can better support men leading GE work in Canada.

### 4.1 How Work with Men and Boys Fosters Gender Equality for Women

Respondents were asked how their work with men and boys fosters greater GE for women. Two primary themes emerged. First, several talked about the root causes of violence against women and how, by working with men directly to transform masculinities, violence against women can be reduced: “As we are evolving and learning, we are realizing that the root cause of sexual violence is definitely connected to GE; it is definitely connected to unhealthy ideals and mindsets of young men and of masculinity in general” (Participant #1). Respondents agreed that helping individual men heal from trauma, build healthy relationships, use non-violence, improve communication skills, and overall re-examine masculinities were identified in this theme:

“If we have an advanced, and healthy, and non-oppressive masculinity being promoted in our community that one, these guys would have better emotional regulation skills and better communication skills and, therefore, be better partners with their wives and their kids, and just better role models” (Participant #3).

Second, respondents agreed that working with men as agents of change helps to build allyship with women and share power:

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*“So to me gender equality or equity is usually about power, or power sharing and how people use power interpersonally, communally, socially, and structurally. So, in preparing men to become allies there is a certain amount of sensitization to power dynamics that we do” (Participant #9).*

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### 4.2 What Motivated Men to Get Involved in Leading Gender Equality Work?

Men were asked what motivated them to get involved in GE work. There were two main themes: having a personal or ‘sensitizing’ experience that raised their awareness, and being influenced by specific people and teachings.

### 4.2.1 Sensitizing Experiences

A ‘sensitizing experience’ is a personal experience that raises a man’s awareness to gender inequality, violence against women, or gender-based violence.<sup>53</sup> In other words, it is an experience that makes gender inequality known or real to a man. For men who participated in this study, four experiences emerged that sensitized them towards issues of gender inequality and often became the origin of their GE work. These were: 1) Personal experiences with racism, oppression and exclusion; 2) Experienced childhood trauma; 3) Disclosures of violence from others; and/or 4) Becoming a father.

**Personal Experiences with Racism, Oppression, and Exclusion.** The most prevalent sensitizing experience for twelve men was their own personal encounter with oppression or exclusion. Examples include experiencing homophobia, transphobia, racism, and mental health stigma.

For those interviewees who identified as gay or transgender, encounters with homophobia and transphobia were identified as a sensitizing experience. Participants explained how oppressive experiences sensitized them to wider gender inequality and oppression faced by women: “I came out in my teens as a young gay man. I have been able to draw the links between experiences between violence against women and domestic violence, with experiences of homophobia and discrimination” (Participant # 15). In a similar vein, culture, or race via racism, or discrimination was another theme of exclusion for participants who identified as visible minorities. Much like Gender and Sexually Diverse male-identified people, several Men of Colour connected their experiences of White supremacy, exclusion, and colonization to gender inequality. One participant shared:

“I am brown, and so I have an experience of being on the outside, of not fitting in, of not being valued or really feeling valued, and so I think I [can] probably, to a certain extent, identify with girls and women who had that experience” (Participant #26).

Finally, personal experiences with mental health stigma sensitized a few of the respondents to women’s experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression.

**Experienced Childhood Trauma.** Analysis revealed that having lived through a personal trauma as a child or young person sensitized men to issues of gender inequality and violence against women. Ten men disclosed abuse as a child/youth, and explained that this experience opened their eyes to gender-based violence, and motivated them to become involved in its prevention. Disclosures included childhood sexual abuse, child physical abuse, sexual assault, and witnessing domestic violence. For some who identified as Indigenous, impacts of intergenerational trauma were a sensitizing experience: “I went through a lot of trauma as a young person – sexual and physical, emotional abuse – my whole life. I got into the work because I didn’t want young people to go through even a little bit of what I went through” (Participant #33).

**Disclosures of Violence from Others.** Nine men discussed receiving disclosures of violence from others, primarily the women in their lives, and that these disclosures sensitized them to women’s

experiences. This ranged from experiences of sexual assault, harassment, exposure to domestic violence/homicide, and inequality in the workplace:

“There was one moment with [my friend when she disclosed a sexual assault], but so many similar moments with my peers that I think it really cemented for me how problematic the systems we have are, and how problematic our beliefs about sexual violence are” (Participant # 18).

**Becoming a Father.** Eight men discussed the experience of becoming a father and how this sensitized them to gender inequality issues that their children may face. For one participant: “I had a daughter...and I am going to commit the next ten years, twelve years of my life to changing the community she is going to grow up in” (Participant #1); and another, “I have visibly Indigenous daughters and the propensity of the current society is to harm them and marginalize them just because they are visibly Indigenous women, so I am deeply motivated to try and create as much of a seismic shift as possible” (Participant #2).

#### 4.2.2 Influences

Men also identified important influences that motivated them to get involved in GE work. Themes here include: 1) A commitment to social justice; 2) Female family members (typically the mother); 3) Religion/cultural teachings and key writings; and 4) Female mentorship.

**A Commitment to Social Justice.** The majority of men interviewed (N=21) described their personal commitment to social justice and change as a chief motivator. Some indicated there “was no choice but to continue [the work]” (Participant #1), and that “once you have seen [gender inequality], you can’t un-see it” (Participant #12). Others described it as “a passion” (Participant #10), “a calling” (Participant #28), that they are “doing the right thing” (Participant #11), and “it feels good, it feels right” (Participant #24). One participant emphasized that for many Men of Colour, social justice and/or community activism is a cultural value: “we just see this as our responsibility” (Participant #8).

**Female Family Members.** The influence of women in many men’s lives was another major theme for 21 interviewees, with the vast number referring to the influence of their mother in their GE work (N=17). Men described their mother as “strong-willed” (Participant #11), “a strong-presence in our family” (Participant #15), a “leader in her field” (Participant #20), and a “powerful role model” (Participant #21). Mothers tended to teach their sons about equality, respect, and inclusion of others despite difference. For a few men, their mothers excelled in their employment during a time when this was atypical. For other men, witnessing their mothers’ struggles with poverty, abuse, working multiple jobs, single-motherhood, racism, and addictions informed their understanding that “the world was heavily gendered” (Participant #25). As one respondent further illustrates, “I was always raised by women and I always saw women struggle in a society that basically gives them less than men or treats them and degrades them” (Participant #33). For a few other men, the influence was from a sister, wife, aunt, grandmother, or girlfriend.

**Religious/Cultural Teachings & Readings.** Nineteen men identified specific theories, teachings, and readings that influenced them in their GE work. Most of those who spoke about this theme did so in regard to influential writers, authors, and academics spanning concepts such as feminism, intersectionality, anti-racism, Indigenous teachings, social/cultural norms, the spectrum of gender, rites of passage, cultural competence, non-violent communication, and leadership. For some, this was faith-based – including liberation theory,<sup>ii</sup> and teachings from Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam – while for others Indigenous teachings were essential:

“I am [name of Indigenous Nation removed for confidentiality] and we have many teachings on equality and respect for women...and there are many other teachings in our culture that promote equality, and the value and respect that is required of boys and men to treat women and girls with respect, and that they are our equal; they are not less than us, and they are not greater than us” (Participant #31).

**Female Mentorship.** Eighteen men identified women in their professional or personal life (not a family member) who acted as a mentor and encouraged them in their GE work. For many, this woman was in a leadership position within their place of employment and, in a few cases, a peer at work. Other examples were of women from feminist organizations or other activist-type organizations, women leaders from a cultural community, university instructors, and school teachers. Men described how these women offered mentorship and support as they navigated gender socialization and developed GE programs. Many female mentors also challenged particular ways of thinking and doing, encouraged critical thinking, promoted accountability, helped problem solve, listened, and provided support. For example:

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*“In terms of what opened me to the possibility of gender-equity work, and in particular violence prevention in that area, I sort of go back to some of those people I mentioned earlier, Indigenous women, Women of Colour who are the people I would say are responsible for my understanding of the world beyond my own personal experience and have invested the time and energy to explain to me, and hold me accountable, and [are] willing to talk about mistakes in perception and action that I had made as an ally along the way” (Participant #9).*

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#### **4.2.3 Summary of What Motivated Men to Get Involved in Leading Gender Equality Work?**

Men described a variety of sensitizing experiences, influencers and motivations for engaging in GE work. For several respondents, it was through a sensitizing experience where they first became attuned to issues of gender inequality and violence against women. For some, this involved a

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<sup>ii</sup> Liberation theory emphasizes social concern for the poor and the political liberation for oppressed peoples.

personal experience with oppression and exclusion such as homophobia or transphobia, racism, and the stigma associated with having a mental illness. Through these experiences, men shared they were able to connect with women's oppression. Experiencing trauma in childhood was another sensitizing experience described. Several disclosed child sexual abuse, growing up with witnessing and experiencing family violence and physical abuse. These experiences motivated men to get involved as adults to try and prevent or reduce male violence. Others described disclosures of violence from loved ones or peers as a sensitizing moment and what motivated their engagement. Finally, becoming a father was emphasized. Fatherhood was identified as a key moment for some of the respondents to get engaged in promoting GE.

Men also identified important influences that contributed to their involvement in GE work. For many, a commitment to social justice was a chief motivator. Several explained they felt morally compelled to work towards change as they feel it is the right thing to do. Many of the respondents were also influenced by female family members both as children and as adults. For most, it was the influence of their mother who was described with many positive and strong adjectives. In other cases, it was their mother's struggles with abuse, poverty, and racism, for example, that attuned them to gender inequality and violence against women. Along similar lines, other men described important female mentorship they have received over the course of their lives from peers, colleagues, and employers. These mentors supported men in understanding gender discrimination and violence, promoted accountability and provided support. Finally, men described important religious and cultural teachings along with feminist readings that influenced their GE work. A range of theories and concepts that informed their work were described such as liberation theory, intersectionality, rites of passage work, anti-racism, social justice and Indigenous teachings.

### **4.3 What Challenges or Barriers do Men Face when Leading Gender Equality Work?**

Men were asked what challenges or barriers they face when leading their GE work. Five common themes were identified: 1) A lack of resources and capacity to do this work; 2) Interest or buy-in from the broader community; 3) Tensions with men leading GE work; 4) Organizational and institutional barriers; and 5) Isolation, burnout & the inability to maintain balance at a personal level.

#### **4.3.1 Lack of, or Limited Resources and Capacities to Conduct this Work**

Seventeen men identified limited resources and capacities for this work. For close to half (N=14) of the participants, this was in the form of lack of funding. This scarcity in funding dedicated to supporting men leading GE work has several implications according to those interviewed. For some men, they do GE work completely voluntarily. In the absence of a paid position, some described the challenges associated with delivering an effective and meaningful program. Other men indicated they spend a lot of time looking for funding in place of doing actual work:



“A lot of time, my work...has been reduced to trying to find funding...like, we can’t even do the work that we set out to do because we are spending so much time administratively to try and fortify what we are doing” (Participant #1).

For a few, this meant not knowing where to look for funding or missing funding opportunities, while for others it involved trying to fit their work into various funding portfolios.

For those who are paid in their position, interviewees indicated they are often the only one in their organization and struggle keeping up with implementing supports and programming. An influx of funding would assist in hiring more staff, paying coordinators, and delivering and scaling effective services, according to those interviewed. Without which, it “limits the pace at which we can engage men, even as the interest among men grows” (Participant #9).

Capacity was a second sub-theme that some felt was limited (N=6). Capacity in this context refers to skills, training, tools, frameworks, and curriculum and is closely tied with a lack of funding. Some shared they worried if they were working with men and boys in the best way, if they were responding to issues effectively, and if they had the right competencies and skills: “I have some personal fears, like how do I deal with that if [the participants] are really racist, or they are really sexist, like what do I do with that?”(Participant #26).

#### **4.3.2 Interest or Buy-In from the Broader Community**

Broader interest, buy-in, and legitimization was the second major theme identified as a challenge by 14 respondents. For the majority, this referred to men not showing interest and not showing up to GE programs, events, or discussions: “I think this is still a very highly stigmatized area and it is difficult to try and get men to participate” (Participant #17). When men do attend, it is often those who are already advocates and the participants explained, they “end up preaching to the choir a lot, talking to [the] usual suspects” (Participant #7).

For several respondents, the lack of interest and buy-in to their GE work was external – from other sectors, and community groups. According to one, in some sectors such as investment, ideas around GE are fairly new and not yet widely supported. Other interviewees discussed how their men and boys’ work is not legitimized by university institutions, systems such as Child and Family Services, and other community organizations:

“I think the biggest challenge with this work for me overall is a lack of buy in by other people - not in my agency, but externally. I overall find that to be one of the biggest challenges is just getting into places, and I like to think that we have a really good reputation; I think that I have positive relationships within our community, but there are a lot of folks that don’t prioritize this type of work” (Participant #18).

Five men described experiencing negative reactions from feminists, activists, academics, and those from the men’s rights movement. As illustrated by one respondent, “For one of my events I had



emails from men's rights activists saying that they were going to show up and crash it, and also emails from feminists saying they are going to show up and crash it because we were not feminist enough" (Participant #19).

### 4.3.3 Tensions with Men Leading Gender Equality Work

Thirteen men referenced several tensions they are experiencing in leading this work and that these tensions present particular challenges in moving GE work forward. Seven men explained that the absence of, or resistance from, feminist leaders in acknowledging experiences of men, such as high rates of suicide or mental illness, within GE work was a common challenge. For these participants, connecting GE work with men's gender-based experiences was an important way forward:

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*"At the end, a lot of these issues that I think men and boys are facing, whether it be suicide, addiction, incarceration, homelessness, the propensity for violence, the fact that aside from sexual violence men are the primary victims of violence. You know, I think those can all be reframed as gender equality issues, and then it brings everyone to the table in a really meaningful way"*  
(Participant #12).

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One respondent's statement exemplified the tension this work brings:

"This is controversial because it looks sometimes that we are colluding with men, but in fact we are co-opting men into a discourse that is richer, and broader, and more nuanced by the history of their socialization and the nature of their clinical issues. So, yeah, I think that is where our work fits [with GE]" (Participant #30).

The second tension identified by participants was how to work with feminist and women's organizations that are still apprehensive about focusing attention on men and boys. One respondent stated:

"I mean in the violence space, but more broadly in the GBV space...all of the ecosystem is very heavily focused on engaging women and children, and so strategies that target and engage men and boys are sometimes not welcome by stakeholders in the ecosystem and are seen as not to be trusted and a bit of a threat, and a bit of a displacement and all those things, so that has definitely been a challenge" (Participant #2).

The last tension was related to funding. A few men reported that women's organizations have voiced concern that their funding is being taken away and given to men doing GE work. While many understood the concern (and, agreed with it), they explained it contributes to a sense of distrust and tension:

"Some women's organizations feel that resources should be put towards supporting women

and children rather than working with men and boys, and I totally understand where that comes from. Again, it is part of the resource scarcity situation or environment we find ourselves in” (Participant #15).

Respondents indicated they do not want funds that take away from the work of women’s organizations and front-line services.

#### **4.3.4 Organizational and Institutional Barriers**

Nine men identified organizational or institutional barriers as a challenge to their GE work. For some participants, these barriers took the form of a lack of space, time and investment from their company or organization. Others identified a lack of leadership, inadequate resourcing for projects, and difficulty with embedding GE work into the structure of their organization.

With regard to those working in large, national systems, dominant ideologies became a barrier to GE work. Those respondents who worked in systems such as criminal justice, policing, and military described how difficult it is to challenge traditional, patriarchal, and hyper-masculine cultures. One respondent explained, “So I have often had to argue with people that tradition isn’t [about] keeping things the same. Tradition needs to evolve at all times respecting the past” (Participant #5).

In the education system, an absence of structural support to prioritize programs with boys was identified as a chief barrier. As GE work is typically not part of the provincial Education Act or curriculum, or intentionally woven into the school day or culture, some indicated it is a “logistical and structural” challenge to run GE work as an extra-curricular activity.

#### **4.3.5 Isolation, Burnout & the Inability to Maintain Balance at a Personal Level**

A final theme representing challenges and barriers to men leading GE work occurs at a personal level. Eight men described feeling isolated, burnt out, or struggled with balancing their paid employment, GE work and family. A few highlighted the theme of isolation and that this isolation affects them personally and limits the amount of meaningful work that can be done:

“The work that we do is kind of lonely, and you are kind of isolated, and you are usually the little stub at the end of an organizational structure where people support your work, but they don’t really know what you are doing...And I don’t just mean that emotionally, but in terms of who do I bounce ideas off of? Who do I get a second opinion from? How do I coordinate fifteen volunteers at a men’s circle, and frat training, and all these different things when you are kind of a one-man operation? I know a lot of people doing this work are one-man or one-person operations, and that is really, really challenging for the sustainability of a program in terms of burnout and just in terms of getting things done” (Participant #19).

Others identified burnout – either they have experienced it, or they are concerned they will experience it: “I am really overwhelmed, and you know, on the brink of burnout lately, so really just

trying to take care of myself” (Participant #12).

For a few others, it was the struggle with balance that limits their ability to do effective GE work. One participant who leads GE work outside of paid employment described:

“It is tough to balance. It is really important that I maintain a healthy manifestation of my own masculinity in my own life if I am ever going to lead a charge in that direction. I mean I have to still be a good husband and a good father, and meanwhile I am spending an hour with you on the phone in the morning on March Break when my kids are downstairs. So, I am very cognizant of what I am trying to do here and making sure it is done in my own life. Like on any given day, [I have] forty emails to answer” (Participant #1).

#### **4.3.6 Summary of Challenges and Barriers of Leading Gender Equality Work**

Respondents were asked about the barriers and challenges they face while leading their GE work. The most significant barrier identified was a lack of funding specific for men and boys within the GE umbrella. Many indicated that working with men and boys around GE is in its infancy largely due to this lack of funding to develop male leaders and the field of practice. Capacity of the men leading this work was also identified as limited. Men explained they are restricted in their ability to access training and skill development in this area. Compounding a lack of resources and capacities is a lack of legitimization of the work, as described by many interviewed. Several felt their work was undervalued, dismissed, or ignored – resulting in limited buy-in from companies, organizations, individual men, and women’s organizations.

Another important challenge identified by participants is the tension that results around the framing of issues and experiences. As revealed in the analysis, much of the GE work with men and boys requires a re-centering of the male experience which tends to counter the predominate feminist frame which centres the experiences of women. Respondents added that much of their work with men will ultimately impact GE and gender-based violence, but that there is disagreement about language and effective approaches. A second related tension with feminism and women’s organizations as explained in the interviews, is the concern that funding that is given to men and boys could be used for underfunded women and children’s services, adding another layer of distrust and apprehension.

Respondents also detailed organizational and institutional barriers they encounter with this work. For those working within companies and systems, having dedicated space, time and investment is needed in order to pursue GE initiatives in the workplace in a meaningful way. For those working within larger systems, traditional and/or dominant patriarchal ideologies persist making GE and inclusion initiatives difficult. While a lot of work occurs within the education system, respondents indicated that there is great diversity across the country and in geographical areas as to how work with male youth and boys occurs. As GE work is typically not part of provincial Education Acts or curriculum, or intentionally woven into the school day or culture, it can be very difficult to offer effective sustainable programs. A final theme related to challenges occurs at the personal level.

Interviewees described feelings of isolation burnout and struggle with balancing their paid work, GE work and families.

#### **4.4 Why Don't the Majority of Men and Boys Engage in Gender Equality?**

Interviewees were asked why they think the majority of men and boys do not engage in GE through day-to-day activities, discussions, programs, or advocacy. Three primary themes were found: 1) Male socialization and male social privilege; 2) Most men are disconnected and apathetic to GE; and 3) Men are afraid. While these themes speak generally to men and boys, some respondents made comments particular to boys.

##### **4.4.1 Male Socialization and Male Social Privilege**

In this study, the most commonly reported reason men do not engage in GE work was because of the collective socialization of males and their social privilege (N=18). Several participants explained that gender socialization includes the construction of traditional masculinities, or what one called the “male script”, hindering men’s engagement. Respondents explained men are expected to not show emotion, talk about feelings, or ask for help, and as a result they tend to not ask for help, or get involved in issues of GE. Respondents explained there is a social pressure to adhere to these ideals of what it means to be a man, and this affects whether men engage in GE. Respondents added that not only are men socialized to not engage in GE issues, but they also benefit from the privilege they receive as men in society. In this respect, interviewees described that men do not have a vested interest in addressing gender inequality (unlike women) because they reap the benefits:

“It is a function of male privilege that we are able to ignore, seemingly without consequence to us personally, what other people are going through or the ways in which we might be passively complicit, or actively causing harm to others, so that blind spot extends for about 350 degrees, so we can see 10 degrees, but our socialization tells us that we should assert our knowledge, that we should never be wrong” (Participant #9).

Some indicated this may be particularly relevant for Caucasian men. Men of Colour, or racialized men, may have the privilege of being male, but face racism and exclusion, which adds a layer of complexity when trying to mobilize men who feel oppressed or disadvantaged by patriarchy.

##### **4.4.2 Most Men are Disconnected, Apathetic to Gender Equality**

Sixteen of the interviewees identified disconnection and apathy as reasons for lack of GE engagement amongst men. Several stated that men tend to ignore, deny, minimize, or overlook issues of GE largely because they live the benefits of gender privilege, and are therefore able to disconnect and not participate.

Interviewees also stated that men tend to not view themselves as “gendered beings” according to one respondent. Others added that GE has been framed in a manner that largely reflects the

interests of women. In doing so, men may not easily connect with GE issues, often seeing it as a “women’s issue”: “A lot of men in general don’t want to get into the GE thing because they don’t think it is their fight” (Participant #33).

A few interviewees indicated that men, who do not think they personally are part of the problem, are also apathetic and unlikely to get involved. They believe “they are a nice guy” and do not commit sexual assault or domestic violence, and therefore do not need to engage as engagement is for those who are perpetrators.

#### 4.4.3 Men are Afraid

Another reason men do not get involved in GE is due to fear, according to thirteen respondents. The theme of fear took several forms in its description. The first way fear was described was in relation to men making mistakes within their GE work, of being called out, judged, or shamed. One respondent working within the private sector explained, “we have a lot of male executives who individually believe in this, but are petrified of going forward and having these conversations [in public] because they are terrified of saying the wrong thing and insulting someone” (Participant #12).

Fear was also represented in the interviews as fear of losing power and privilege with other men. While “power” was the most frequently mentioned, other losses highlighted were status, wealth, identity, and manhood.

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*“I think there is a fear and a defensiveness of what does it mean for me to engage? What do I have to give up? If I admit my mistakes, will my career be ruined? What will happen to my reputation? Will I be lovable?...I think it feels it is a risk for a lot of guys” (Participant #9).*

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Several described that in the current context, fears are being stoked in the public discourse to preserve the status quo and that GE is translating for some men as a loss of power, influence, and identity, potentially “taking away men’s manhood” (Participant # 17). Several tied this fear to a rise in the men’s rights movement, as men are more easily able to relate to that rhetoric. A few stated, that those leading the men’s right’s movement have positioned themselves as the “voice for men” and when men feel pushed away or excluded from the feminist-driven GE movement, men turn to men’s rights because they feel better understood.

#### 4.4.4 Why Boys Don’t Engage

While most of the above themes apply to both men and boys, nine interviewees made comments specific to boys. Some stated that boys lack positive role models, thereby affecting their interest and ability to engage. Others explained this, in addition to social pressures on male youth, the desire for belonging within peer groups, and the effects of current media culture (i.e. social media,

video games) all reinforce traditional forms of masculinities and disengagement from gender justice.

Further, a few attested that many adults assume boys are not interested or able to engage in GE conversations or programs, so they are not invited in:

“I think there is an assumption that boys don’t want to have these conversations, or they don’t want to talk about this, or they are not interested in this stuff, or they are not capable of having these conversations, and those are our own biases around how we treat teen boys, that they don’t have a vulnerable side, they are tough, they will be fine, and they don’t cry. So, we also bring in those assumptions about boys” (Participant #26).

A few respondents argued, in contrast to this assumption, boys want to engage, but are often not given the opportunity: “I think boys are dying to engage...I think they want to, but they don’t have a safe platform” (Participant #1). A final participant added that boys tend to be more open to change:

“At that age I don’t think you are so dug into a lived experience or a point of view that you are not willing to change from that, whereas I think adults really struggle with being dug into an identity or a perspective, and then if you are wrong it is almost shameful or a weakness and it is really hard to adjust. So, our conversations with boys haven’t been that contentious; it is almost as if it is something they never had an opportunity to be exposed to or thought about” (Participant #12).

#### **4.4.5 Summary of Why Men and Boys Don’t Engage in Gender Equality**

The findings revealed there are several reasons why men tend not to engage in GE in day-to-day actions, conversations, programs, or advocacy. According to those interviewed, the most prevalent reasons are male socialization and male social privilege. Respondents explained that the current dominant social construction of masculinity confines men to certain behaviours and actions that do not include asking for help, showing empathy, self-reflection/growth, resulting in a lack of interest or engagement with GE issues. Several also added that men benefit from the social privilege of being male, and are therefore free to disengage without consequence, unlike women. Closely related to these reasons, participants described that men are able to disconnect from GE issues and/or become apathetic to issues that appear not to directly affect them personally. Men have not been socialized to consider themselves as gendered beings, and GE has not been constructed to reflect the interests of men; therefore, many men are able to deny, minimize, or ignore gender inequality, or view them simply as “a woman’s problem.” Adding to apathetic reactions to GE, many men consider themselves to be “nice guys” or not abusive, and therefore not part of the problem.

Another reason men do not engage is fear, which took several forms in the findings. Respondents indicated that many men are afraid to make mistakes, be called out, judged, shamed, and blamed. Interviewees detailed how this fear holds some men back, even those who support GE, from direct public engagement. For other men, fear is related to a loss of power and privilege. Some interviewees explained that getting engaged may feel risky, and some may capitalize on this fear

(such as the men's rights movement) by emphasizing what men will lose: power, status, work, relationships, and "man-ness".

While many of these themes are similar for boys and male youth, additional specific reasons were identified. Some respondents explained that boys lack exposure to positive role models and, as such, are often only exposed to the traditional narratives of manhood that are constricting, and reinforce gender inequality and violence against women. Desire to be accepted within peer groups, influences of social media and media culture (e.g. video games) all compound boys' experiences, and largely do not foster engagement in GE. However, a few interviewees argued that boys are not given the opportunity, and that many are "hungry" to have these types of conversations. Some described boys as more open to change; they only need a safe space with healthy leadership to do so.

## 4.5 How Might we Better Engage Men and Boys?

Interviewees were asked how we might better engage more men and boys in the advancement of GE. Findings revealed 11 main ideas: 1) Build a new narrative and approach; 2) Create safe spaces; 3) Support more GE leaders and champions; 4) Promote male, female and ethnocultural mentorship with male youth and boys; 5) Leverage the school setting; 6) Embed a feminist, intersectional approach, respecting multiple worldviews; 7) Target transition periods and entry points in men's lives; 8) Raise awareness and educate men; 9) Make the work relational-based; 10) Leverage workplaces; and 11) Link GE to the promotion of men's health.

### 4.5.1 Build a New Narrative and Approach

The majority of participants indicated that a new narrative and new way of engaging men and boys was needed (N=22). This new narrative and approach involves several features such as including the positive aspects of masculinity, being empathetic and supportive to men as they explore gender socialization, meeting men where they are at along the change continuum, and using different language. Ultimately, this new narrative and approach involves shifting the GE discourse to one that is more inclusive and inviting to men and boys.

**Include the Positive.** For several of those interviewed, a new narrative involved a focus on positive aspects of masculinity and the positive inroads of GE with men and boys rather than the current predominant construct of the potential harm and danger of men. One participant explains:

"All the guys who come in and they basically get talked to behind closed doors like they are potential rapists...the tone of it is very punitive, suspecting, demeaning, and they come out feeling...some come out feeling embarrassed, angry, confused, and some come out really internalizing that oppression...I think we need to stop being compartmentalized about how we look at big scale issues, and do the much harder work, much slower process work of trying to include all aspect in this conversation about the male experience; the positives that men bring need to be acknowledged" (Participant #28).



Importantly some emphasized, this is not in place of acknowledging men's violence, or accountability, but rather, in addition to: "I think we need to talk about the bad stuff. No denial about the bad, but we need to talk about the good; we need to talk about the world we want to see, not just the world we can barely stand, you know?" (Participant #7).

**Be Empathetic, Provide Support.** Others described the new narrative needs to include an approach that provides empathy and support for men and boys. This involves "acknowledge[ing] the anxieties" (Participant #19), "coming from a standpoint of listening and understanding" (Participant #29), and "mix [in] a lot of curiosity about men's experiences" (Participant #8). A few participants added this move is in contrast to historical responses that were more confrontational and punitive. Several respondents agreed it will be important for men to have the opportunity to talk about their own experiences of victimization. For one interviewee, the absence of an empathetic and supportive approach is what drives some men into the men's rights movement.

**Meet Men Where They Are At.** Several men explained that the approach requires that we meet men where they are at, not where we want them to be. This entails accepting that men are at different stages of change and different stages of understanding GE. One respondent stated:

"There are some people who expect men who have been living – who have been socialized – to be a certain way and have lived that life for 20, 30, 40 years, to have the same ideas of gender as they have had, say, as scholars who have been training in this area for 10, 15, 20 years...This is not to say that no one should ever stop trying to challenge people as they progress through different stages of their understanding, but to simply write people off because they are in one stage, but they are not at your stage [is problematic]" (Participant #25).

Analysis also revealed that the theme of meeting men where they are at also requires space for men to learn, make mistakes without judgment, and invite difficult conversations rather than shutting down dialogue:

"I have stopped shutting down that conversation so quickly, and I have moved more towards, 'Tell me more about what you are thinking?' And sometimes...what I have found is there is a real personal story behind there...I think those guys are actually a source of potential allies if we can get them around their trauma story to actually own their experience and get compassion" (Participant #7).

**Use Different Language.** The use of language was raised by eight respondents. These men explained that language can invite men and boys in, or it can turn them away. Words such as "patriarchy", "feminism", "GE" tend to keep men and boys away according to several interviewed:

"Like in my fraternity presentations I never use the word 'patriarchy', right? Which makes me feel a little bit traitorous, or like I am not doing feminism correctly...but I also know that in the past [we did], 'here is what the patriarchy is, let's talk about it,' and I know that entire



fraternity shut down, and they didn't want to be trained again. I realize this is a bit of a capitulation, but I also know we need to meet people where they are at if we want them to engage" (Participant #19).

Many respondents stated they still speak about patriarchy and feminism, but do so in a non-direct way:

"I feel with this work you have to be a little sneaky. It is a group to talk about masculinity, but we don't mention the word 'masculinity' anywhere in the signs, and we don't really talk about that in the group either. We are talking about masculinity, you know, we are trying to shape the boys into good feminists, but we don't like, we don't say the word 'feminism' and we don't say the word 'masculinity'. You know what I mean? If we put that on the sign the boys aren't going to come because that is dorky [to the boys]" (Participant #13).

A final comment about language was presented in relation to some ethnocultural communities where there may be resistance towards words such as 'feminist':

"Not leading with 'I am a feminist' [has] helped me access people in religious communities where it was taboo, or it was not the thing to identify oneself in that way, but where the values and principles were there to call upon, to activate, or to catalyze in a sense. This has given me a kind of access to people that are maybe the people who are least reached by this teaching, like this theory of feminism, but who, when they are approached in different ways, through their religious traditions, through their cultural traditions, could actually...there are things in there, embedded within their own traditions that could be marshaled to get the same results, but just taking a different route" (Participant #10).

#### **4.5.2 Create Safe Spaces**

Building on the findings of a new narrative described above, 21 men identified the need for safe spaces for men and boys to come together and engage in dialogue free from judgment:

"I think there [are] a lot of millennial men, like myself and our peers, who might have questions but nobody to point to, no platform, no space to go and unpack those kinds of things, and that is what we are really trying, to meet [through our work]...we are trying to create those spaces and really have those conversations around what it means to quote/unquote 'be a man' in a really complicated and nuanced way, versus being a man equals perpetrating sexual violence" (Participant #12).

Interviewees described there are few opportunities for men to gather and explore gender socialization and healthy masculinity. Instead, according to those interviewed, the majority of spaces such as sports teams, bars, and clubs tend to reinforce harmful or toxic aspects of masculinity.

This was also emphasized as important for male youth: “We teach our boys to not engage and we don’t give them space to talk about stuff, and when space is given, boys are more forthcoming about their emotional lives, and what is important to them” (Participant #32). What’s more, male youth want these spaces as indicated by other respondents:

“Teen boys are not necessarily thinking about GE, and yet when we start those conversations, they are very hungry to have the conversations. They want to be having different kinds of relationships with each other, with men and boys, and they want to talk about these topics” (Participant #26).

For boys, safe spaces were most commonly identified within the school setting in an all male group format.

#### 4.5.3 Support more Gender Equality Leaders and Champions

Many of the men interviewed (N=17) described the need for more visible male leaders and champions in GE work. They explained men need to see other men endeavouring to work through GE issues and, in doing so, would provide others with a “roadmap...that [could] counteract patriarchy and White supremacy” (Participant #25). For some, this involved public figures: “I think one example that has worked well is partnerships with our CFL team to involve men, and in particular athletes and business leaders and community leaders as role models in talking about gender-based violence and sexual assault prevention” (Participant #20) in public ways. Respondents also saw the need for leadership and champions at the smaller, community level. For those in small communities, this involved local politicians, chiefs of local communities, and business leaders.

**Leaders in the Workplace.** For many of those interviewed, GE leaders and champions in the workplace were critical. Several respondents spoke about receiving clear direction from high-ranking officials within large systems to promote GE initiatives, or were themselves, the high-ranking official giving direction to staff:

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*“It is really about the leadership at top, the new people at the beginning [i.e. new recruits, new staff] and then trying to capture as many as you can in the middle, but almost as – I have my hands in the air which you can’t see – but it is almost like squishing together the two pieces of bread in the sandwich until the bread touches one another” (Participant #5).*

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**Elders.** A few respondents talked about the important role of Elders within Indigenous communities as a way to foster GE: “I think Elders are very important to raising awareness of GE” (Participant #31), and that “More and more Elders are coming around. Again, a lot of it is led by women Elders, but there are a number of male Elders [coming forward]” (Participant #25). Participants explained that some of this work has challenges as Elders, like many Indigenous people, have been through their own trauma and are undergoing the process of healing. The stories that Elders hold are vital

for the younger generation, as described by one interviewee, and part of the work involves closing that gap between youth and Elders.

#### **4.5.4 Promote Male, Female and Ethnocultural Mentorship with Male Youth and Boys**

Close to half (N=14) of the research participants discussed the need to have adult men engaged in male youth/boys' lives as role models and mentors. Some explained that, "youth are always looking up to us" (Participant #15), so having adults role model healthy and equitable relationships is crucial according to those interviewed: "I think it would just change the perception, especially for boys, seeing a bunch of men operating in a good, kind, loving way" (Participant #24).

Several believed this type of mentorship should be available prior to key moments in a young person's life, such as puberty:

"I think mentorship is really important, and the younger the better. I think some of the more toxic ideas that came into my [life as a youth]...like toxic masculinity, misogyny, sexism – things that were catalyzed in me...around team sports in public school, you know? Especially when I was going through puberty, and I had increasing levels of aggression and the boys around me had increasing levels of aggression, and the coaches that we had in some cases were people who didn't actively oppose some of the toxic behaviours we were coming out with. They just didn't confront us" (Participant #10).

Interestingly, the importance of female role models for male youth was also emphasized: "Most of the mentors in my life have been women, and so the influence of women as mentors to younger men I think is very critical" (Participant #2). Having mentors from particular ethnocultural communities for youth was also highlighted. As one participant explained:

"The Muslim men, so men from my own community whom I could relate to, who looked a lot like me, who were family men, who were men that had complex, mature relationships with women, like in their professional life and their personal life who could then talk to us" (Participant #10).

#### **4.5.5 Leverage the School Setting for both Men and Boys**

A similar number of respondents (N=14) stated that GE engagement with boys and youth should occur in the school setting. Many described this was a logical place as this is where boys spend most of their time. Further, the school setting also has access to a wide range of diverse boys and male youth – something that may be more difficult to achieve outside of this environment. Participants suggested that the school setting is one that is likely "more open to this stuff" (Participant # 21), and already beginning to have, "more and more conversations about consent and respect that are really critical [and are] part of curriculum" (Participant #20). Men felt this could be leveraged to engage boys and male youth directly.

Many groups with male youth are already occurring in the school context covering a range of topics such as masculinity, gender norms, relationships, and sexuality, so there is a lot to draw from. One respondent described their process where they targeted certain young men, gave them a formal invitation, provided an incentive (missed classes), and offered food. Interest grew rapidly and extended beyond capacity: “The word spread after the first year – and then I guess now, five or six years in, we have too many guys coming voluntarily – we have about forty [and can’t accommodate]” (Participant #13). Running programs during school hours was echoed by others as after school hours has been challenging. Respondents explained GE work with boys needs to be “cemented” (Participant #27) within the school system, becoming a regular offering.

A final comment involved increasing the number of men working and volunteering with boys and male youth in the school setting:

“There is a huge decline in [male] coaching, and teacher involvement, and just supporting young guys because there is a stigma that if you are in that place that somehow we got to keep a close eye on you; you are a pedophile...I mean I think on a structural level, or a systems level, change probably has to happen with, like, wage equity and having these classically gendered work positions...the elementary schools here it is really wild, the only male working in them is the principals, and they are the men, and so yeah, what does that say to all the young guys in those schools? And who is showing up to do most of the volunteer work? It just keeps perpetuating itself...we need to get men engaged” (Participant #3).

#### **4.5.6 Embed a Feminist, Intersectional Approach, Respecting Multiple Worldviews**

Twelve men referenced intersectionality as a key approach in their GE work. For one respondent this took the form of recognizing his own privilege and the intersectional experiences of others:

“I have learned so much about intersectionality and the complexity of experience. You know, there are 932,000+ different complex experiences in our community and many people experience multiple barriers, multiple forms of oppression, or even violence in our community...I acknowledge my own privilege in this as a Settler man from an economically-fortunate position in society, with this important title, and the power and influence that comes along with it. With that comes an obligation to bring positive change that starts from my values, but also leverages my privilege to try to make change and see justice in our community” (Participant #20).

A second respondent emphasized the importance of grounding GE work within feminist intersectionality: “I think in engaging men...really do it from an intersectional, feminist approach, and make sure that we are doing the feminist work” (Participant #18). For a third participant, this approach should also be reflected in funding criteria. In other words, this respondent explained,

those seeking funding need to be able to demonstrate intersectional approaches, so that men's GE work does not just reflect a White perspective.

The theme of intersectional experiences also arose from Indigenous respondents. Some explained the tension many Indigenous men grapple with between ideas of male privilege and the significant layers of oppression due to racism and colonization:

“For Indigenous men who are asked to think about male privilege, they are also thinking about the challenges put forth. And it is challenging for them...in one way, they are very much oppressors, but in other ways they are very much oppressed. And this is kind of a difficult thing, I think, for a lot of Indigenous men to wrap their head around” (Participant #25).

Respondents also asserted that GE work needs to recognize that men are widely diverse, with multiple worldviews and unless this is reflected in practice, many men will be left out of the work: “If you just come at it with a Western epistemology, it is not going to reach everyone. I think you need to present multiple worldviews, and you need to create space for multiple worldviews” (Participant #8).

#### **4.5.7 Target Transition Periods and Entry Points in Men's Lives**

Twelve men emphasized targeting entry points and transition periods in men's lives as a way towards fostering GE engagement. The most common transition period identified was fatherhood:

“As fathers we have an interest in raising new generations of healthy kids, and we have an interest in ensuring our sons don't end up using violence or engaging in inequitable ways towards their partners, and that our daughters grow up to live in healthy equal relationships” (Participant #15).

Respondents identified particular strategies with fathers such as role modeling programs, hosting events for fathers, parenting groups for fathers, engaging fathers through the school system, and targeted work through the health system such as a public health nurse checking in on the health and wellbeing of new fathers.

Other respondents emphasized going to where men tend to congregate such as sports teams, schools, clubs, and workplaces. A couple of those interviewed discussed their work with university fraternities while others explained their work with sports teams goes beyond single-session workshops:

“I will say that one of the things that has been really successful is, we developed a multisession program for male athletes. And so we had previously been doing this with the [provincial] Hockey Association and minor teams where we had a single session program, and we would come in, and do a conversation about sexual violence and about masculinity, and

then this year we started delivering a program for athletes at the post-secondary level which included a multisession piece, so they are receiving a three-hour training on sexual violence, consent, and masculinity, and then also a follow-up – there [are] weekly emails – and then we trained their captains to deliver four 15-minute sessions to each team, and then an online bystander component” (Participant #18).

A final respondent described how he lectures at every officer course, so all the new recruits receive GE training.

#### **4.5.8 Raise Awareness and Educate Men**

Eight respondents stressed that increased education and awareness are needed amongst men in general. Interviewees from various sectors such as health, engineering, finance, and public service discussed how many men remain unaware of GE issues. Respondents stated that sharing statistics and facts is one way to educate males in certain professions:

“It is interesting, sometimes just pointing out to them some statistics, you know, we have seventeen medical schools in Canada and some of them existed before Canada was formed as a nation in 1867, and in that history we have only had six female Deans of medical schools – the sixth was just appointed a couple months ago. So sometimes people, frankly, just lack awareness of the fact that some of this inequity is blatantly in front of our eyes, but we don’t deal with it honestly unless we actually look at some of the data, the hard numbers. I have actually found raising other men’s awareness of the data inclines them to get interested and that is probably the starting point” (Participant #14).

Another participant underscored the need to teach GE in professional schools such as business, finance, and engineering:

“Showcasing some of the entrepreneurs that we work with, some of the products and services that they have, and why we invest in them, these are all storytelling pieces and networking pieces, but that could be something that could be really valuable. I teach a course at the [university] that teaches young professionals on how to invest with a gender lens” (Participant #4).

For one interviewee, raising awareness involved hosting GE-related events in the workplace such as panel discussions, International Women’s Day activities, and round tables:

“We always have International Women’s Day events at our work, and the panels we put together in work, and the events that we attended outside of work, I find those to be highly motivating. When undeniable statistics and stories are brought forward in an open forum in which discussion is promoted, it is hard to argue there aren’t issues still to this day that need to be dealt with. I think getting more participation in those kinds of events can help open eyes” (Participant #16).

Another added the need to foster ongoing public discussions when gender-based reports, such as scorecards or research, come out. Finally, a few talked about the importance of campaigns that promote conversation and increase awareness of particular GE issues, hosting high-profile speakers, conferences, and film screenings.

#### **4.5.9 Make it Relational-Based**

Eight respondents discussed the importance of a relational-based approach to working with men and boys, explaining that change cannot occur in the absence of relationship:

“I think what men are lacking in general, is really strong, trusting relationships. We try and make corrections to masculinity outside of relationship, and without the relationship it just is not going to happen. Without the relationship, there is not going to be trust, and without trust you can’t expect any kind of change” (Participant #1).

Respondents added that many men and boys do not have intimate, trusting relationships with other men in the first place, and that this work, “fulfills a core need that was there to begin with” (Participant #1).

Relationship, or collectivism, is also an important value in many Indigenous and ethnocultural communities. GE engagement with men and boys that emphasizes this would reflect natural tendencies of some diverse men. Two quotes illustrate this theme:

“In the Indigenous community, there is an instinct to group together, an instinct for family, for community, for companionship, for, you know, a communal experience...it feels good to know you are not alone, it feels good to make connections and bond with the other men” (Participant #24).

“There is an impulse we can work with to contribute, to be a strong member of our communities. I work a lot with collectivist men for whom their role is...their sense of masculinity [which] comes from being part of the community rather than standing up as an individual” (Participant #9).

#### **4.5.10 Leverage Workplaces**

Seven of those interviewed commented on strategies for organizations including for-profit companies. These comments fell into three smaller categories. First, closely related to education and training in the workplace described in a previous theme, respondents highlighted the need to target business leaders:

“I think, honestly, providing gender training for people in positions of power is a no-brainer investment, and it should almost be mandatory...formalizing training...it is expected that



anyone at a director level would have had this...How can you manage women if you have never taken gender training?" (Participant #23).

Another discussed how new staff, recruits, or trainees should receive mandatory training on gender-based analysis, equity, and inclusion.

A second sub-theme involved setting GE business or company-level targets, and then establishing incentives:

"As an organization, if you believe in gender equality or diversity you've got to set a target and then you've got to measure the attainment of that target, which means you've got to create incentives to achieve that target the same way you do with revenue, customer satisfaction, cost management, or whatever" (Participant #11).

Incentives identified by respondents included bonuses, promotion, and reputational enhancement. For one interviewee, this level of capacity was directly related to promotion and advancement within the organization:

"But that is what we are starting to do, to redefine our processes, so that people who have that real emotional intelligence are the ones those are going to start to advance and be the leaders in the organization. And those [who] don't can be our tactician, but they will lose the influence over the others, so they will be sort of doing task-based work" (Participant #5).

Finally, a couple of respondents discussed several company-level changes around staff recruitment, interviewing and retention processes that were made as a result of undergoing a gender-based analysis process:

"We rewrote all our job descriptions, so they were gender neutral – we didn't even realize the bias we were building into these things...And then over and above that we understood through the research that women are inclined to not apply for roles they are not a hundred percent qualified for. So, if they don't have one of the qualifications, we might not even see these applicants. So we started to tap our networks and reach out proactively instead of waiting for people to come in, identifying people that we wanted to have inside the organization, and going after them, so we weren't wholly dependent on the inflow of resumes that we were getting as a result of these job descriptions. And then in the interview process we make sure there is a man and a woman present in all the interviews that we had, and we made a commitment to interview any woman whose resume came across our desks, just to start to address some of the lack of volume of candidates and making sure we were considering all potential candidates" (Participant #16).



#### **4.5.11 Link Gender Equality to Men's Health**

Six men spoke at length about the need to link or frame GE work with that of men's health. These respondents discussed the significant health issues that men face and saw a strong connection between these health issues and wider goals of achieving GE for women:

"If we are healthy as men, we will be healthy for our families, our partners, our children, for our communities, we will just be better, right? Healthy contributors. In essence we (men) are not very healthy right now, and there [are] a lot of statistics around men's health that point to that" (Participant #26).

For one respondent, this is more pronounced for Men of Colour: "[Men] of Colour are dramatically overrepresented in terms of early death due to violence, criminality, substance use, all of that, but we are dramatically underrepresented in the helping statistics, pursuing physical and mental health" (Participant #30).

Several explained that if GE is framed in this way, and it is made personal for men, it might draw more men to the table and result in greater movement towards goals of GE:

"I think a lot of it is just broadening that lens of those gender issues and saying gender-based issues are not trans or women's issues; they are also men's issues, and they manifest for men in this way...engaging men and boys for themselves versus for others...when men are healthy and they wield power well, and they are resilient, and they are not perpetrating violence, and they have better relationships with their peers, etcetera, etcetera, I think it is a bit of a flip of how some of the work is being presented these days" (Participant #12).

#### **4.5.12 Summary of How we Might Better Engage Men and Boys in Gender Equality**

Interview respondents were asked how we might engage more men and boys in the advancement of GE. Several approaches and strategies were identified. The most frequent theme found involved the need to build a new narrative. Ultimately, respondents explained that the current GE conceptualization and approach does not invite men in. A new narrative is needed that includes a focus on positive aspects of masculinity in the wider GE discourse rather than a continued emphasis on the harm of men. Respondents were clear: this is not to replace accountability, or to disregard men's use of violence, but in addition to it.

Second, analysis reveals the new narrative needs to also incorporate empathy and support for men. In other words, acknowledging men's anxieties, experiences, perspectives, and beliefs about GE and related issues, by responding with curiosity and inviting discussion. Interviewees described this is in contrast to historical responses that typically involved confrontation and demanding responsibility from men. Respondents explained these past approaches have pushed men away and some towards the men's rights movement.

Third, the new approach needs to meet men where they are at along the change continuum. Work cannot only target men who identify as pro-feminist, according to those interviewed, and it cannot expect men to become a pro-feminist advocate overnight. Several emphasized that change takes time. Fourth, different language is needed if we are to invite men in. Words such as “feminism”, “patriarchy”, and even “gender equality” do not easily speak to many men and sometimes repel them. Participants stated, instead, similar concepts can be explored, but with more accessible and softer language that invites men in. Further, different language may also create more space for some ethnocultural and Indigenous groups to engage. These four ideas: positive masculinity, support and empathy, meeting men where they are at, and using different language were put forth by research respondents.

The creation of safe spaces for men and boys to engage in dialogue and exploration was the second most common strategy identified from the interviews. Men said this space needs to be free from judgement and must allow men to unpack ideas related to GE in the absence of women, but facilitated by pro-feminist male allies. This was particularly noted for boys and male youth. Without safe spaces to unpack masculinity, interviewees explained men and boys are left with only their current spaces such as through sports, where dominant forms of masculinity, sexism, and misogyny are often reinforced.

A third strategy identified was better supporting male GE leaders and champions. According to those interviewed, this took many forms such as encouraging public figures to stand up for GE – investing in leadership at the community level through local politicians (i.e. mayor) and community leaders, Elders in First Nation/Indigenous communities, and leaders in workplaces. Fourth, promote mentorship for male youth and boys. Respondents indicated that male youth and boys need a variety of positive, healthy male role models at key times in their life, such as at the onset of puberty. Female role models for young men and boys were also identified as many of the respondents were supported by women throughout their lives. Fifth, respondents emphasized the need to leverage the school setting. Interviewees explained the school system is a natural place where boys and male youth are located, and many programs already support some of the important concepts to advance GE. When boys are invited, given incentives, and provided with safe space, respondents shared interest, and engagement appeared to exceed expectation.

Sixth, strategies need to embed a feminist, intersectional approach including multiple worldviews. The concept of intersectionality was found to permeate many of the interviewees’ GE work, and was particularly underscored by respondents who were Men of Colour. Men stated that because privilege and oppression are not equally shared amongst men, diversity and intersectionality of the male experience needs to be a fundamental part of GE work. Seventh, analysis found that GE work should target entry points and transition periods in men’s lives; the most common of which was fatherhood. Other entry points discussed were those where men tend to congregate such as fraternities, sports teams, ethno-cultural clubs, friendship centres, neighbourhoods and workplaces. The eighth strategy identified by those interviewed was general awareness and education. Sharing GE statistics and facilitating training and workshops in workplaces, post-secondary schools,

professional schools and associations, and hosting panel discussion or open forums were identified as ways this could be achieved.

Nine, GE work with men needs to be relational-based. Men who were interviewed argued that change can only occur in the context of relationships and, further, values of relationship and collectivity are common among ethnocultural and Indigenous communities. As such, relationship should underpin GE work with all men, according to several interviewed. Leveraging the workplace was the tenth strategy described. A number of approaches were discussed including training in the workplace, establishing incentives to meet company-level GE objectives, and address gender-bias in hiring and retention practices. The final strategy found from the analysis was to link GE work with men's health as a way to invite men in and support their wellbeing.

## 4.6 What are the Benefits & Costs for Men Leading Gender Equality Work?

### 4.6.1 Benefits of Leading Gender Equality Work

Men were asked about the benefits they have received from this work. Two predominate themes were identified: 1) Personal fulfillment and growth; and 2) Improved and broadened relationships. These were followed by a smaller theme of, 3) Notoriety and recognition.

**Personal Fulfillment and Growth.** Well over half of the interviewees (N=23) identified personal fulfillment and growth as a benefit of this work. Several talked about how engaging with GE work made them a better person, how they felt rewarded and satisfied: "It makes me feel like I am actually doing something to better the situation" (Participant #22), and for another, "I don't even call it work. I wake up, and I am happy to do what I do, and I don't even call it work because I am passionate about it and I love it" (Participant #33).

Many identified personal growth and learnings such as improved knowledge and understanding of issues, communication and self-reflection, improved skills and confidence, and how to express feelings:

"I feel like I have to keep learning all the time, but I have gained so much knowledge and so much understanding, and I have expanded my empathy and everything; I think it has been so good for me. It has made me a better communicator; it has allowed me to deal with some of my own masculinity stuff that I have struggled with and to feel much more comfortable as a person" (Participant #18).

**Improved and Broadened Relationships.** Seventeen men identified improved relationships with children, partners, friends, and colleagues as a result of their GE work:

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*“It has allowed me to be, I think, a hundred times the husband and the father that I was before...I have learned how to be intimate with my wife, and I have learned how to be intimate with my kids...I have grown a thousand times over as a person, and then I have found value in those relationships”  
(Participant #1).*

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For others, relationships have been broadened to include meeting new and interesting people. For some, this work fostered stronger male friendships: “I made some of my most powerful male friendships through [this] work, and I know other men have experienced that as well, and the rarity of that in the wider culture...so many men don’t have those kinds of friendships in their family system or their friendships” (Participant #28).

For others, the relationship benefit was connecting with women:

“Benefits? I get to hang out with the strongest women and girls that I know!...For me it is a privilege to know these women and girls and because I have such respect for them, it is an honour for me to be in their lives...whether it is friendship or family, I think this is something I so highly respect” (Participant #31).

**Notoriety and Recognition.** Eight men humbly described benefitting from the work through notoriety and recognition. Some shared they have won awards for their work, received media attention, been invited to speak at events, and received positive feedback from people:

“I am getting a lot of recognition in terms of being an advocate and being a voice in that space, and obviously I think a lot of that is due to my demographics. So being a tall, straight, White male talking about GE, intersectionality, feminism, etcetera, etcetera, has definitely given me a platform in that space where I think a lot of people are wishing more people of my demographics would be involved” (Participant #12).

#### **4.6.2 Costs of Leading Gender Equality Work**

In addition to the benefits described above, men were also asked about costs they experience as a result of leading GE work. Their responses fell into four categories: 1) Stress, burnout, and vicarious trauma; 2) Backlash; 3) Career progress and income; and 4) Rejection and exclusion.

**Stress, Burnout & Vicarious Trauma.** Thirteen men identified stress, burnout, and vicarious trauma as the biggest cost of GE work, explaining this work can take a personal toll. For some, their GE work is voluntary – beyond their fulltime employment. In these situations, men shared that they struggled to balance the demands of the GE work with their paid employment, family, and self-care.

Most related their experiences of stress and burnout due to a lack of resources and isolation:

“It is [the] kind of the regular burnout that you see in the non-profit sector; [it] is also relevant for me, especially working mostly alone, and with a tiny budget, and not many coworkers who really understand what I am doing, and not a real sense of community; that is part of the cost” (Participant #19).

For one respondent, the burnout was related to feeling unable to make an impact due to limited resources: “I am not burnt out by what I have done already; it is burnout from what there is to do, and in order to make more of an impact we need...we need to get bigger as an organization...it involves more people, more capacity” (Participant #32).

In other instances, men reported hearing several disclosures of trauma during the course of the GE work, which impacted them personally in the form of vicarious trauma:

“So I got vicarious trauma...I am engaging in a lot of [public and community] engagement and there is just so much pain [in] the space – accumulated pain in the space and unspoken – so much of it is suppressed and operates in the space of secrecy, and so much of it is vicious. So, I go into those spaces and people, because they see me as a safe person, they just come up and then just make disclosures that are, like, soul-shaking kind of disclosures, and it just happens over, and over, and over, and over” (Participant #2).

**Backlash.** Eleven men stated they experienced backlash from various groups. For some, men’s rights activists targeted them and their work, accusing them of “betraying men”. A few others received backlash from women’s organizations, feminists, and academics, in the form of personal attacks through the media:

“When we first started doing this [work] we received, like, a lot of...a lot of negative looks, and criticisms – a lot of criticisms – that [were] directed towards us through social media...[it was viewed as] just another form of how the issues of men are going to take over and end up ignoring the issues of women” (Participant #25).

**Career Progress and Income.** Eight of those interviewed shared that their decisions to pursue GE work has come at the cost of career advancement:

“It has definitely cost me career progress...given my experience I could easily accelerate my teaching career into administration, or whatever, but the time strain has kept me from doing extra qualification work or whatever, I would have to do to meet their criteria – I am ten times more capable, but I have less access to it, I guess (Participant #1).

Having poorly paid or insufficiently paid GE positions was also identified:

“There is also a struggle for hours as well, like initially when I had this job I got ten hours a week paid, and I was working much more than that, and I have had to fight, and fight, and fight to actually get hours that I could actually sustain myself on because otherwise it is just

kind of a gig economy of having to piece together financial security in order to do the work” (Participant #19).

**Rejection and Exclusion within Workplaces and Social Circles.** Eight men shared their experiences with rejection and exclusion by other men. For one who worked in a traditionally male-dominated workplace, “I wasn’t welcomed into [workplace] peer groups as much because I was seen as...I don’t know what I was seen as, but maybe not as much of a real man” (Participant #21). Others described that they had become “that guy” in the workplace; one to avoid, or speak carefully around:

“But there is a cost and you become sort of ‘that guy’, and sometimes you are ‘that guy’ [who] is not like us. Now that cost to me is very minimal, and I say that sincerely...But that would be the one thing is that I have been very careful of. So, to me the cost has not been great, but sometimes being labeled as ‘that person’ that is kind of the stick in the spokes all the time” (Participant #5).

#### **4.6.3 Summary of Costs and Benefits to Men Leading Gender Equality Work**

Men interviewed identified several benefits and costs of doing GE work. The most common benefit described was personal fulfillment and growth. Those who do this work have a deep sense of commitment, and shared they receive an enormous amount of personal satisfaction and reward. Many respondents stated they have improved and broadened relationships with children, partners, friends, and colleagues as a result of their GE work. Others detailed how they have met many interesting people in this work, and have fostered new friendships with like-minded men. Notoriety and recognition were the final benefits shared amongst several of the respondents.

In addition to several benefits from this work, men also described costs. Stress and burnout were the most common, and many related these experiences to a lack of resources and isolation. A few discussed vicarious trauma as a result of this work as well. Another cost described by those interviewed was career progress and income. For some, the time they dedicate to volunteering in GE projects takes them away from career advancement opportunities. For others, who are paid for their GE work, their income is minimal. Backlash from men’s rights groups, women’s organizations, and academics was a third cost revealed. Some interviewees have had personal attacks, threats, and pushback against their GE work. The final cost described was experiencing rejection and exclusion from others in workplaces and social circles.

#### **4.7 Ways to Better Support Men Leading Gender Equality Work in Canada**

Men were asked what would make their GE work easier. The strongest themes revealed were: 1) New investments and sustainable funding; 2) National alignment; and 3) A network of male allies/formalized support system.

### **4.7.1 New Investments and Sustainable Funding**

Seventeen respondents indicated that new investments and sustainable funding would significantly help their GE work. Participants explained increases in funding would allow voluntary groups to hire a paid worker and formal organizations to expand in capacity and staffing. Additional monies would also allow for scaling up programs, expanding out to new groups and communities, and overall increasing program effectiveness:

“If there was more money coming in for this type of work, for women’s groups and groups like [ours], that would be fantastic, and then we could begin to develop better awareness programs, education programs, and allow us to get into the schools, and really just do a more effective job” (Participant #31).

Others added increases in investment would allow them to offer programming on a more consistent, long-term basis rather than through one-off projects that are relatively ineffective. Some felt that an increase in funding would increase their capacity and ability to do this work resulting in the engagement of more men and boys.

Funding needs to be sustainable, according to some, not project-based but long-term. Respondents recognized this is not unique to their own work; that is it a common barrier across the social sector:

“Yeah, so like ongoing, sustainable funding. I know it is systemic throughout a lot of the non-profit world, and it depends on the shift in our government and where their priorities are. Yeah, but as far as men’s services we are seeing more and more opportunities to apply for funding, but they are all sort of one-off project funding opportunities, rather than sustainable. I mean our women’s centre faces this constantly, too, so it is not just a male gender thing” (Participant #3).

### **4.7.2 National Alignment**

Ten respondents discussed the need to have a level of national alignment on men and boys engagement in GE work. For some, this involved a formal national engagement strategy that would foster alignment and collaboration across the country: “I think we need a much, you know, a much stronger, broader strategy at the federal level that trickles down into the provinces as well” (Participant #15). Another respondent added that there is a Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Table on gender-based violence that could coordinate men and boys work: “A national men and boys’ FPT working group that reports to the FPT on gender-based violence that focuses specifically on men and boys would be helpful, for sure” (Participant #2). Several added that a national strategy would help support cross-country connection and break down silos as illustrated in the quote below:

“Better connection with other people doing the work. We have a little bit here and there, and we have some projects you know, we have one project, for example, that includes the [city]



program...and so we have some connection, but we have almost no national connection to anyone” (Participant #18).

### **4.7.3 A Network of Male Allies/Formalized Support System**

Nine respondents indicated they needed support to do this work. Some of those interviewed described wanting a space where they can work through ideas and tensions, receive support, and problem solve with other men engaged in this work. Many expressed they feel like they work in isolation and in silos, and would welcome the opportunity to build a network of men who share a similar lens: “We need to get formalized, and we need to get organized, and that is going to be tough sledding, but it is better than these little fiefdoms...we can do a lot better when we come together” (Participant #28). For interviewees in some sectors such as finance, finding allies is difficult and, as such, a formalized support system would help fill this gap and invite others in. Importantly, several indicated this system would need to be funded as resources access is difficult for many such as those in rural and northern contexts:

“It would be great to go to a conference, or to connect with other men, who are working along the same way, but where this was not my fulltime job, and where we are not funded as an organization, I then have to either invest my own money into doing that – which could be quite challenging for me right now – or go and seek funding in order to be able to go – which capacity-wise isn’t possible and is also another challenge” (Participant #32).

Others emphasized the need for intersectionality to be prioritized in this network. Without which many diverse men may not be included or able to participate. One quote illustrates this reality:

“There is a men’s group meeting...a couple of weeks from now, and it would be great for me to go there, but again...there isn’t just one problem in the world; there is also the White dominant culture. They have organized this gathering, but it is in the middle of Ramadan, so I will be fasting, and the men I will be meeting with will be fasting, so we are not likely going to go and participate. And in addition, there is a [financial] cost to it...we don’t have the finances to go and attend anything like that anyways. So, where there are movements, they still have a lot of work to do in terms of how they are structured, how welcoming and inclusive they are, and who they are appealing to” (Participant #8).

### **4.7.4 Summary of Ways to Support Men in Gender Equality Work**

Respondents described what is needed to make their GE work easier. The most prominent theme was increased funding. New investments and sustainable funding would allow those working in GE to hire staff, increase capacity, and scale programs thereby increasing impact and reach. Second, interview respondents identified the need for national alignment in their work. Some thought this could be achieved through a formal men and boys’ engagement strategy, or through a men and boys’ Federal-Provincial-Territorial Table that reports to the one on gender-based violence. Having some integration at the national level to help direct and align the work across the country, would

increase impact, and would provide a foundation for the work according to those interviewed. The final theme put forward by respondents is the development of a network of supporters and male allies. This space could be used to combat isolation and to work through ideas and tensions, receive support, and problem solve with like-minded men. Intersectionality was a key idea put forward here as this network needs to consider rural and northern contexts, class, race, gender, and culture. Several added that access, resources, and timing are important considerations necessary to avoid the network being dominated and led by cisgender, White men.

## **5.0 A Way Forward**

Based on the findings from this research and supported through academic literature, there are five broad recommendations on how to better engage men and boys as allies, partners, leaders, and co-beneficiaries in advancing GE. These are:

1. Governments and funders must invest in those pro-feminist men already leading GE work in Canada;
2. Governments, non-government organizations, workplaces and civil society need to create more opportunities and experiences for men and boys to deepen their knowledge and awareness on GE;
3. All sectors need to develop resources and supports that are easy to access;
4. Governments, institutions and funders need to reinforce and support GE in settings in which we live, learn, work, play, and worship; and
5. Governments and funders need to bring pro-feminist men and feminist leaders together to continue to advance this field.

The recommendations outlined below ask different orders of government, sectors, and stakeholders to play a role in engaging and mobilizing men and boys to advance GE in Canada.

### **5.1 Invest in Existing Male Leadership from Coast to Coast to Coast**

Right now in Canada, there are a small number of men who have become public advocates for feminism, GE, and stopping violence against women. As demonstrated in the study, there is very little funding going directly to men and pro-feminist organizations to support an infrastructure of male leadership. The majority of the men in this research expressed a need to connect with one another, learn together to advance the field, and build a network across Canada. The findings strongly support creating more male-ally spaces (e.g., events and opportunities that bring men together) along with a sustainable, accessible, supportive national network. Determining criteria for involvement and principles of practice for this network would be important to maintain a healthy, pro-feminist male space.

Interestingly, the findings from this study confirm principles and commitments identified in the academic and grey literature as necessary to move this work forward in a sustainable and impactful manner. The following principles emerged from the men interviewed and are confirmed by leading

academics and activists<sup>54</sup> as critical to structuring a national network that will support men as partners, co-beneficiaries, and allies in advancing GE in Canada. These include the following:

1. Work must be situated within an in-depth analysis of patriarchy and power, and a commitment to gender justice (i.e., taking a feminist approach).
2. Partner with women's rights organizations, leaders and movements.
3. Link gender justice to other forms of intersectional justice, such as racism, classism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, etc.
4. Build the evidence base to advance the area.
5. Scale up evidence-informed programs and practices.
6. Support systematic, large-scale, and coordinated efforts focused on changing individuals and institutions that sustain violence and gender inequities.

The network strategy must also build the capacities of men to do GE work. Findings from this research suggest the capacities to lead GE work are not highly developed or integrated among men in Canada, and the practice and research literature is limited in this regard as well.<sup>55</sup> This work is therefore developmental by nature and will require time and commitment to collectively identify the associated capacities and skills required in men to do this work, as well as key approaches, practices, and progress outcomes/indicators. Cultivating common principles and standards of practice across Canada will be important to advance and unify the area.

The network strategy also requires addressing diversity among men which aligns with academic literature<sup>56</sup> and the following call from the United Nations:

“What men have in common is the gender privilege that comes from living in societies that, in many different ways, privilege men over women. Men's lives and experiences are in other ways extremely diverse, shaped by such factors as class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion, and nationality. Men's sense of themselves as men and their experience of their gender identity cannot be understood in isolation from these diverse factors that give some men power over other men as well as over women. Such diversity produces different needs, and it is important to respond to specific needs in fostering men's engagement.”<sup>57</sup>

## **5.2 Getting More Men and Boys Through the Door to Build Awareness and Advocacy**

To engage more men and boys in GE work we must first reach them. Research confirms the interviewees' experiences and recommendations on how to engage other men and boys in GE work.<sup>58</sup> They agree that men and boys need personal, 'sensitizing' experiences that help to raise awareness of violence and/or gender inequalities along with help making sense or 'meaning' of these experiences in ways that are motivating. They also need direct invitations for involvement along with social conditions or environments that support and reinforce GE. Thus, it is recommended governments make two investments:

1. Allocate designated funding to feminist and pro-feminist organizations across Canada to support positions and programs that create awareness and opportunities that engage men and boys. This approach must incorporate messages that men are vital to the GE and violence prevention movement, have important strengths to offer, and are part of the solution. Many participants explained that men have a story to tell, and we need to create local opportunities to be curious and compassionate, and engage them with empathy and support. A new narrative is needed along with safe spaces in which to do this work. In doing so, many men will become important allies.
2. Fund grassroots and ethnocultural communities and leaders already engaged in this work. Creating a fund that local ethnocultural organizations or community groups could access to create meaning-making opportunities that are gender transformative, and will advance GE work on the ground.

It is critical to ensure that an intersectional approach informs all interventions that are funded. The concept of intersectionality requires us to acknowledge that we all have intersecting identities (based on gender, race, socio-economic status, etc.), and are all impacted by intersecting systems of power. Integrating an intersectional approach adds a layer of complexity that needs to be addressed throughout this work. We must consider anti-racism and anti-colonialism perspectives and bring these forth in our analysis, funding structures, and interventions. Our study raised important findings that suggest Indigenous men, Men of Colour, and ethnic minority men may not have access to the same opportunities or benefit in the same way from GE work.

### 5.3 Develop Resources and Provide Supports that are Easy to Access

Many men in our study admitted to being influenced by specific teachings and readings, and stated that a centralized resource or platform for important readings and teachings along with emergent research would be helpful. Having a centralized, easily-accessible database with lists of readings and tools on various topics would be important. This database should have oversight by a pro-feminist/male-ally researcher or organization.

Interviewees recommended that the federal government support knowledge translation by regularly convening researchers, service providers, and policy staff to build capacity around men's and boys' engagement by ensuring dissemination of the latest research, and by keeping the field up-to-date with emergent evidence-informed policy and practices.

### 5.4 Leverage Parenthood and Settings in Which we Live, Learn, Work and Play

**Fatherhood.** A focus on leveraging fatherhood as a transformative time to develop gender-equitable relationships both in the home and community is a win for all genders and is supported by the grey and academic literature.<sup>59</sup> Developing a comprehensive fatherhood action plan that includes father-friendly policies and investments across the prevention continuum would be an important step forward. Several Nordic countries have increased father involvement and leveraged this approach as a vehicle to advance GE in the home and workplace with success; these can be

used as a foundation for the Canadian context. “These policies have been accompanied by other policy changes that will be required such as: increased publicly-funded child care, opportunities to have more flexibility in the scheduling of work hours, and work cultures that support fathers’ efforts to give priority to their involvement with their children.”<sup>60</sup>

**Motherhood.** The importance of mothers was also highlighted in the study. The majority of interviewees identified their mother as a key influencer in their GE leadership work. This finding suggests that GE work should be leveraging motherhood as a key influencer in the lives of boys. Supporting mothers would therefore be an important focal area.

**Workplaces.** The federal government should commit to developing a workplace accreditation program<sup>61</sup> and process for employees and any contractors, and should be open to any workplace to access and get accredited. Academic scholarship advances that workplaces are a key entry point for GE work,<sup>62</sup> and the findings from this research support this. There are several cases across the country of workplaces that are taking active steps to advance GE and prevent and respond to violence against women. Further research on these cases in the Canadian context is warranted. One respondent suggested that consideration of financial incentives, penalties, and fines would support systems/structural changes.

**School settings.** Our findings suggest that work with boys and male youth in school systems is occurring episodically across Canada. This work would be more impactful if there were greater strategic alignment, including agreement on core curriculum, practices, and principles.<sup>63</sup> Further, at the provincial level, Education Acts should integrate GE and healthy masculinity with social and emotional learning, healthy sexuality and relationships, and bystander skills.<sup>64</sup> Providing accommodating structures, programs and supports for boys is needed. “Educators will need to be trained; schools will need to commit to whole-school approaches; and school jurisdictions will need to develop policies to this effect.”<sup>65</sup>

**Invest in positive male mentorship for boys and men.** Mentorship was another essential reason male advocates entered and continued in their GE leadership work in this research. Mentorship was also identified as critical for boys and men who may not be at the advocate stage. Emphasis on four aspects of mentorship is warranted. First, having healthy, positive male mentorship is critical for boys as they age.<sup>66</sup> As indicated in previous sections of this report, this could occur through school systems, but it can also be facilitated through communities and organizations. Second, male GE advocates want mentorship and support. Peer and near peer models (where slightly older males work with younger ones) may be an effective addition to the national strategy and/or network of allies described in the first recommendation. Third, role models need to include ethnocultural and Indigenous men. Boys and male youth from particular communities need access to mentorship within their communities. Fourth, this research also found that women are an important mentor to men and boys and should also be included in mentorship investment and development.

## **5.5 Bring Men Who are Leading Gender Equality Work and Feminist Leaders Together**

Efforts should be made to bring feminists and male-allies together to work through identified tensions, build new narratives and ensure men's work fosters GE for women. Accountability in relation to power and privilege needs to be worked through. It is important that men be accountable for their complicity (explicit and implicit) in systems and practices of gender inequality.<sup>67</sup> This involves creating spaces, building capacity for reflection, and recognizing the ways in which both individual men and structures serve to disempower women.<sup>68</sup> We need to work through the process of accountability, forgiveness, justice, healing, and redemption. Transformative Justice approaches could be considered here. The Government of Canada along with provincial governments could support ongoing learning, leadership, advocacy, partnerships, and social change efforts across Canada.

Lastly, there are some cautions in this work moving forward. Practice and experience have taught us that mobilizing a socially-privileged group to work toward dismantling a problem largely perpetuated from within its own ranks is complex work. Efforts to move this work forward must be mindful of this tension and ensure that we are engaging and mobilizing men and boys in ways that do not reinforce or recreate gendered power inequities. That means funding must go towards initiatives that are explicit about how they are promoting/advancing GE, how they are gender transformative, and demonstrate they are resisting the societal reflex of patriarchy. Also, as is evident in our study, the pro-feminist, male-identified movement in Canada is still largely led by cis-gender, White men: the very group that benefits most from GE work (receiving compensation and accolades). Ensuring an intersectional approach at every level of policy, investment, and practice will be key to transformation.

## **6.0 Limitations of this Study and Opportunities for Future Work**

This report has presented the findings from qualitative interviews with 33 diverse men and seven experts engaged in GE work with men and boys across Canada. These men described their motivations, challenges, and ideas on what would help move this work forward in a meaningful way. They offered insight into why general populations of boys and men tend not to engage in GE work in Canada, and identified strategies to increase their involvement. While this research revealed important findings in the Canadian context, there are a few limitations worth noting. First, though the research team endeavoured to have a diverse sample of men, a little over half were identified as White males. This result may have occurred for a few reasons. One possibility is that White males, as the most privileged group, have greater access and opportunity to lead GE in public and more observable ways. Another factor could be that our recruitment strategy was not effective in locating Indigenous and ethnocultural men engaging in GE. We have since learned that perhaps contact via email may not be the best way to find these men or to invite their participation. We surmise that a recruitment strategy with heavier emphasis on relationships and personal contact could have introduced us to more diverse men. We were, however, limited in our time to conduct the study; perhaps a longer recruitment period would have also helped in this regard. Next, it may

be that our language on recruitment materials such as “pro-feminist” may have presented another limitation as some may not identify in such a way. Finally, it may be that White males tend to have more connection to feminist leaders and organizations than Men of Colour or Indigenous men. Because our recruitment strategy primarily involved contact with feminist organizations across the country, it may be that they are unaware of the work being done by diverse men.

As a result of the above limitation(s), we identify future opportunities to forward this work:

- An in-depth and focused analysis on 1) the five Indigenous men who participated in this study, and 2) the ethnocultural men who participated in this study. While we recognize these are very small samples, and within each hold much diversity, we also believe there is value in this focused approach as a starting point.
- A much larger, focused study on Indigenous and ethnocultural men engaged in GE work occurring in the Canadian context. We anticipate there may be more grassroots/community-level work occurring that was only touched on in our study. A separate targeted research study could examine the ideas of intersectionality and GE in a more fulsome manner.
- Similar to the small number of diverse men, because our sample aimed for those working in different sectors to find common patterns, we had small numbers of men from large systems, businesses, and the private sector. Research examining similar questions specifically with men in these sectors would also be of benefit, and in particular interest to those working in these sectors.
- Further research exploring rural versus urban and Northern Territories compared to Southern Canada would also be noteworthy investigations.

Another limitation of the study involved the data collection process. Because this was a qualitative study, and men described their work in general terms, some of the details of respondents’ GE work were not adequately captured. A survey format would allow us to gather clear data on the types of GE work occurring, approaches used, content covered, target populations, etc. This study began to uncover unique and innovative activities occurring. A project focused on collecting and documenting case descriptions across the country would provide tangible examples, roadmaps, and success descriptions for others to consider.



## Appendix 1: Methodology

### Theoretical Framework

#### *Positive Deviance*

In contrast to typical research that focuses on those who are engaged in deviant behaviour, positive deviance shifts the focus onto the segment of a group or population that are resisting typical norms.<sup>69</sup> Said differently, despite being exposed to the same group norms, having access to the same resources, and experiencing similar challenges, there are those that do not conform to normative behaviour or expectations and instead engage in uncommon behaviours or strategies.<sup>70</sup> This concept has been used in many fields of study such as education, nursing, substance use, sexual activity, and organizational studies.<sup>71</sup> Research on positive deviance has helped uncover variables, traits, behaviours, and other supportive aspects on particular phenomena, which in turn have informed innovative strategies and solutions.<sup>72</sup>

The positive deviance approach fits very well with the objectives of this study since we are seeking to identify and understand the experiences of men who have engaged in GE work despite established gender-based hierarchies, prejudices, and norms. Faced with similar resources and experiences of other men across Canada, we aim to understand the men who have gone against the norm and, through their conduct and personal actions in various settings, have demonstrated a genuine commitment to GE and recognition of women's rights. Applying a positive deviance approach to this work will inform innovative strategies and solutions for men and boys across the country to engage in more gender positive behaviour.

#### *Intersectionality*

Intersectionality is understood as a conceptual tool that is used to examine “the interlocking effects of race, class, gender, and sexuality, highlighting the ways in which categories of identity and structures of inequality are mutually constituted and defy separation into discrete categories of analysis”.<sup>73</sup> There are three primary dimensions according to Choo and Ferree<sup>74</sup> who compiled many reviews on the subject. First, is inclusion of people of colour, in this case, Men of Colour and men who are from other marginalized groups. In this frame, intersectionality is about including those who live at the intersection of multiple oppressions and have traditionally been left out of dominant knowledge creation.<sup>75</sup> The second dimension involves a shift in analysis from one that was historically about additive categories (race in addition to gender) to one that examines the intersection of these categories (i.e. how does gender intersect with race). In this respect, intersectionality rejects the separation and isolation of categories of oppression and instead postulates they are fluid, dynamic, and co-constructing.<sup>76</sup> Finally, the third dimension involves an intersectional system lens that examines how inequality is imbedded in structures and institutions such as the family, criminal justice, health, education, and policy.<sup>77</sup> This comprises a macro-level analysis of the role of systems, structures, history, politics, and society.<sup>78</sup>

Applying intersectionality in practice involves instituting a recruitment strategy that seeks to involve men across various themes of diversity such as race, age, religion, sexual orientation, and class with

the understanding that these intersections of identity create differing and unique experiences. During analysis we will apply intersectionality as an overarching conceptual tool to examine the interview themes, and identify strategies with the understanding that certain groups of men (i.e., White, straight men) will have greater access to opportunities of influence, especially in large systems. Our analysis will include considerations of this and how race, class, and sexual orientation for example intersect with experiences of GE work.

### *Pragmatism*

This study is centred within the pragmatic paradigm. In academic scholarship, pragmatism is explained as that which can function as the philosophical paradigm for social research regardless of method.<sup>79</sup> It is an applied approach to research that replaces traditional concepts such as epistemology and methodology,<sup>80</sup> and is instead guided by the research question, and the best methods to answering the research question.<sup>81</sup> This study is rooted in the work of Michael Quinn Patton<sup>82</sup>, one of the best-known pragmatists in research. He explains, “Not all questions are theory based. Indeed, the quite concrete and practical questions of people working to make the world a better place...can be addressed without placing the study in one of the theoretical frameworks”.<sup>83</sup> Pragmatism is instead concerned with the applicability or usefulness of the research and in many cases whether the research can be used for social or political change.<sup>84</sup> Since the study at hand has practical objectives such as developing an engagement strategy for men and boys, pragmatism was deemed the best way forward.

While pragmatism can be used with any method, this study will focus on qualitative methods through interviewing. Pragmatism in this way is furthered by the argument that qualitative research involves common practical applications and processes.<sup>85</sup> These can be condensed to a few basic principles, “pay attention, listen and watch, be open, think about what you hear and see, document systematically, and apply what you learn”<sup>86</sup>. Adherence to these fundamental principles – independent of whether one is committed to a theoretical orientation – is the crux of sound qualitative work, and is reflective of the pragmatic nature of this approach.

### **Methods<sup>87</sup>**

#### *Sampling*

A purposive sampling strategy was used. This type of recruitment strategy is one where the researcher selects cases strategically and purposefully because they are information-rich.<sup>88</sup> Of the over 15 types of purposive sampling, this study incorporated the use of two: deviant case and snowball sampling.<sup>89</sup>

In line with the strength-based deviance approach, deviant case sampling involves selecting cases that are unusual or special with the view that they can provide rich information on the phenomenon under investigation.<sup>90</sup> This strategy has allowed us to select men who are ‘positive outliers’ in a gender unequal society – in line with objectives of the research.

The study aimed to recruit men who occupy or occupied positions of influence and/or authority

(formal or informal) and who, through their conduct and actions, have demonstrated a genuine commitment to GE as well as respect and recognition of women's rights. With this in mind, critical questions were considered such as: what does a commitment to GE look like in practice? What conduct and what actions would this entail? And how will we determine if a man is truly committed to this work?

In order to address these important questions, we concluded that men must be engaged in this work in public, observable, and confirmable ways. To help determine this, we developed eight GE Indicators with examples to assist us in the recruitment process. The indicators were based on those outlined by the Government of Canada<sup>91</sup>, as well as by international and academic literature. We then consulted with an Indigenous leader/scholar to review the indicators from an Indigenous perspective. The indicators were developed to fit within the study objectives, and many have been adapted to reflect concrete and observable actions and behaviours. They were part of the recruitment materials, and provided a way for men – or those who recommended men – to determine if they were appropriate for this study.

We also utilized our extensive feminist and male-ally network to assist us in identifying men engaged in pro-feminist, GE work. In this way, we positioned our network to function as a pre-screening mechanism. We have also set up a webpage through the already established website from *Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence* ([www.preventdomesticviolence.ca](http://www.preventdomesticviolence.ca)) where people were able to obtain further information and consider the indicators to assist in candidate selection.

The second sampling strategy used was snowball sampling to help uncover more positive deviant cases. Snowball sampling identifies cases of interest through key informants.<sup>92</sup> We reached out to over 400 feminist individuals and organizations across the country to help us identify men who are championing GE in one of the ways reflected in the Gender Indicators. A rationale for the nomination was also requested based on a description of the man's GE work. Our networks responded with over 100 names of men in Canada put forward.

While there is no standard sample size for qualitative studies,<sup>93</sup> we were aiming for 30 men for this study. This sample size allows us to conduct the research in the allotted period of time, obtain a broad representation of Canadian society, and reach data saturation. Saturation is an important principle in qualitative research referring to the discontinuation of data collection as no new information is emerging,<sup>94</sup> and there is enough data to replicate the study<sup>95</sup>. Using an intersectional lens, we are targeting men inclusive of:

- Provinces and territories (urban and rural)
- Gender and Sexually Diverse, male-identified people
- Religious and culturally-diverse groups
- Indigenous groups
- Younger and older adults (ages 18 and up)
- Sectors (private, public, civil society)
- Both official language groups (English and French)

While we recognize that equal representation may be difficult to achieve in practice, following our general recruitment strategy described above, we endeavored to increase diversity through targeted recruitment. For example, we targeted organizations in Northern Territories to help us identify men doing GE work in this region. In addition, we actively sought out Men of Colour and Indigenous men. Of all the nominations, men were chosen based on the nature of their GE work, the sector in which the work occurred, geographical location, and with consideration of diversity. In total, 52 men were invited to participate in the study. Thirty-three invitees responded with interest, and were later interviewed; 17 did not respond and one declined to be interviewed.

### *Data collection*

This study used a general interview guide, also known as a semi-structured guide, to collect data.<sup>96</sup> This strategy provides a systematic way of collecting particular themes of data while also allowing for flexibility unlike that of a standardized interview. In the general interview guide, the researcher outlines a set of themes or questions to be discussed with every interview participant, thereby enhancing the systematic collection of data, yet the researcher is still able to ask other questions, explore, and probe on a particular theme while maintaining a degree of flexibility and spontaneity.<sup>97</sup> The interview guide was sent to participants prior to the interview. Interviews lasted approximately one hour, and were conducted by phone. All participants consented to being audio taped.

### *Analysis*

All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions were imported into the qualitative analysis software NVivo where general qualitative analysis following Patton<sup>98</sup> occurred. This involved content analysis, coding, and categorizing. Content analysis refers to data “reduction and sense-making effort[s] that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempt to identify core consistencies and meanings”.<sup>99</sup> A preliminary coding scheme with an intersectional lens was developed from the interview data by first previewing the first few transcripts in consideration with the research questions and objectives. Following this, transcripts were reviewed and coded accordingly, adding to the coding scheme as new themes emerged.<sup>100</sup> This is considered first-level coding, which does not involve searching the data for deeper meaning; the coding remains at the surface. Second-level coding then occurred to identify patterns and relationships by considering the similarities and differences between the categories.<sup>101</sup> This process involves a deeper, more abstract, and interpretive exploration of the data than the first level of coding entailed. This requires a shift in focus of analysis from the individual interviewee context to that of the categories, and facilitates the consideration of data in alternative ways.<sup>102</sup>

### *Triangulation*

Triangulation in qualitative research is a term used to denote practices that enhance research accuracy and credibility.<sup>103</sup> Triangulation encompasses comparing multiple perspectives, sources, or methods to corroborate the analysis, and build credibility of the study.<sup>104</sup> While there are many strategies of triangulation, this study incorporated three: 1) member checking, 2) analyst triangulation, and 3) thick description.

- 1) **Member Checking:** Member checking is one triangulation strategy that involves confirming the accuracy of the data collected with those who participated.<sup>105</sup> Once interviews were transcribed, they were sent back to informants for review. This gave participants the chance to review their transcripts, and make any changes that they deemed necessary.
- 2) **Analyst Triangulation:** Analyst triangulation involves using multiple perspectives to review findings and themes.<sup>106</sup> Following qualitative analysis and participant member checking, key themes were then presented through the platform Zoom to an expert panel consisting of academics and practitioners from across Canada.
- 3) **Thick Description:** Thick description involves the collection of rich data, so one is able to provide detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences, and to provide sufficient detail, so that others can judge and evaluate one's conclusions and transferability of the findings.<sup>107</sup> This is best accomplished through verbatim transcription, and the use of direct quotations in writing – both of which occurred in this study.<sup>108</sup>

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical issues are important to all forms of research involving human participants, but they are particularly important for qualitative studies due to their highly personal nature.<sup>109</sup> Official ethical approval for this study was received from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Ethics Review Committee.

Two of the most common ethical issues in qualitative research are informed consent and confidentiality.<sup>110</sup> Informed consent holds that, “research participants must be *informed* about the purposes, methods and risks associated with the research study, and they must voluntarily *consent* to participate”.<sup>111</sup> Prior to conducting any interviews or observations, written consent was obtained from all participants. Consent forms were sent out prior to the interview. These forms described the study purpose, what is being asked of the interviewee, what type of personal information will be collected, what will happen to that information, and finally any risks or benefits of participating. Participants were also informed they can stop the interview at any time.

Confidentiality is the second key issue in this type of research. We have outlined our efforts to protect confidentiality as well as been forthcoming about our limitations of doing so in the consent forms. Because the study is seeking men who are engaged in GE work in observable and confirmable ways, they may be identifiable. As such, the thick description inherent in qualitative interviews risks identification.<sup>112</sup>

## Appendix 2: Index – Gender Equality Indicators and Practices

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GE Indicators	Examples
<p>Pro-feminist men who have worked to <b>end violence against women</b> through activism, policy, programs, and campaigns within diverse settings (workplaces, sports, faith communities, neighbourhoods, theatre community, school setting, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaks out on violence against women publicly (blogs, news articles, community events, within ethnocultural and religious communities)</li> <li>• Embedded and enforces sexual harassment policies at work</li> <li>• Led and/or implement domestic violence policies within government, community organizations, or the workplace</li> <li>• Led an anti-violence, GE, or healthy masculinities campaign that supported increased awareness in their community (i.e., ethnocultural, union, cyber)</li> <li>• Led theatre, artwork events, or sport events that tackle issues of gender equality and/or violence against women</li> <li>• Created discussion or support groups for men on violence prevention and healthy masculinities through a pro-feminist lens</li> <li>• Led and/or implemented gender transformative, pro-feminist training, programs or initiatives within systems (criminal justice, unfounded cases within police, Philadelphia model, health policies, LGBTQ/Straight alliances in schools, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p>Pro-feminist men who have advocated and achieved <b>increased participation of women in leadership and decision making</b> in public or private sector, organizations, institutions, committees, or neighbourhoods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instituted a gender balanced Board of Directors, committees, or workforce</li> <li>• Hired and mentored women to be successful in senior-level positions</li> <li>• Supported women political candidates</li> <li>• Established/increased on-site childcare at work</li> <li>• Developed mentorship or training opportunities for women</li> <li>• Championed gender equity programs</li> <li>• Increased representation of women in traditionally male-dominated settings through the creation of programs/policies/initiatives</li> </ul>
<p>Pro-feminist men who have supported equitable <b>access to, and control over, resources</b> that women need to secure for ongoing economic and social equality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invested in women-owned businesses; mentored women entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Created or established foundations/funding to support women i.e., established loan programs for women</li> <li>• Provided subsidized child care on site</li> <li>• Hired more women into senior positions</li> <li>• Implemented and/or supported paternity leave policy within the workplace</li> <li>• Led living wage, poverty reduction, or housing strategies with a gender transformative lens to improve social conditions for women</li> <li>• Established pay equity policies at work</li> </ul>
<p>Pro-feminist men who have enhanced the protection and <b>promotion of the human rights of women</b> and girls through policy/program change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established sexual harassment, domestic violence, or equity inclusion policies within the workplace</li> <li>• Worked to increase women’s access to sexual and reproductive health care</li> <li>• Advanced women’s legal rights through legislation and within family, civil, and criminal justice systems</li> </ul>

<p>Pro- feminist men who have <b>championed increased awareness</b> among decision makers on gender equality issues that are harmful or oppressive to women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met with government and community (i.e., civil society, religious groups, neighbourhood citizens) to advance gender equality issues</li> <li>• Led and role-modeled gender equality/healthy, non-oppressive forms of masculinity within the public or private sector realm</li> <li>• Engaged in working to better the status/rights of transgender and non-binary people</li> </ul>
<p>Pro-feminist men who have <b>advanced healthy, non-oppressive masculinities</b> in academia, community, private sector and/or with civil society</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led feminist-based programs and courses on healthy masculinities and advancing GE</li> <li>• Developed or led positive fatherhood/family programs/movements for men who are pro-feminist</li> <li>• Led healing and gender transformative supports for men (i.e., feminist-based healing retreats, mental health programs, group/individual work)</li> <li>• Created pro-feminist discussion or support groups for men on GE, healthy masculinities, healthy relationships</li> <li>• Led feminist-based strategies to advance men’s help-seeking behaviours</li> <li>• Increased representation of men in traditionally female-dominated settings (i.e. health care, education, social work, arts)</li> </ul>
<p>Pro-feminist men who have <b>established diversified educational and career paths</b> for girls and women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed/led programs for girls or women in traditionally male-dominated career streams (i.e. skilled trades, IT, math, science, engineering, mechanics, construction)</li> <li>• Provided sponsorship and support for women/girls’ leadership within male-dominated environments</li> </ul>
<p>Indigenous men who have <b>returned to traditional practices, ceremonies, and worldviews</b> (or epistemologies) that either acknowledge the role of women as equal to men, or women's roles that are uniquely different, yet important and valued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spoke out/continues to speak out against colonial structures within their communities that continue to oppress Indigenous women</li> <li>• Challenged embedded and colonial attitudes towards Indigenous women in the family, community, and at a Nation level</li> <li>• Challenged negative stereotypes of Indigenous women at home and in public</li> <li>• Actively participated in Indigenous campaigns such as the MMIW Inquiry and the Moose Hide Campaign</li> <li>• Supported the role of Indigenous women in ceremony, including Indigenous women's healing ceremonies</li> <li>• Elevated traditional worldviews of Indigenous women and their roles prior to contact</li> <li>• Adopted parenting approaches that educate young boys and girls about the pre-contact roles of Indigenous women as mothers, grandmothers, and Elders.</li> </ul>



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