

*To support a full creative life for all, Minnesota Communities Caring for Children (MCCC) commits to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, equitable organization and nation.*

## **DEFINITION OF CULTURAL EQUITY**

Cultural equity embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, involvement with the child welfare or legal systems, or religion—are represented in the development and implementation of policies; the support of individuals; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & AFFIRMATIONS**

- Native American and African-American children are 5.3 times and 3 times more likely to be involved in child maltreatment reports than white children. This disproportionality is evidence of opportunity gaps for families of color and American Indian families across all family service systems in Minnesota.

Imagine if... Native American and African-American parents were empowered as leaders in their families, communities, and systems.

- Our work here at Minnesota Communities Caring for Children includes recognition that in order to make real and lasting change in the work we do, we must first identify the root causes underlying the issues faced by the individuals, families, and communities we serve. Historical trauma and intergenerational adversity are integral factors to consider when examining the disparities we are seeing contemporarily in regards to our Native American and African-American families. In order to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of these cycles, we must come along side these families on a path to empowerment-- to build skill sets and knowledge that will lend itself to the nurturing environments and supportive caregiving we endeavor to see, while simultaneously ensuring lasting change by transforming the very systems and ways of thinking that inform the policies and practices that got us here in the first place. Acknowledgement of how systems such as child welfare have been used historically as a means of control, forced assimilation and subjugation, resulting in the unfair and inequitable treatment of our most at-risk populations is the first step in to coming to terms with righting the wrongs that have been perpetuated for far too long.

Our role at MCCC is to amplify the voices of parents to affect positive change in their families and communities; this includes telling the stories that are difficult to hear, even those that are difficult to speak out about. It has been said that “a system cannot fail those it was never designed to protect.” By acknowledging the inequities perpetuated by these systems that were designed with explicit intent to assimilate our children into majority culture through separation from their culture heritage, familial, and social bonds, we are taking a stand and amplifying the voices of parents that have been longing to be heard for generations.

- MCCC acknowledges that our St. Paul offices are on Dakota land, and that MCCC regional staff are housed throughout the state on Ojibwe and Dakota territory.
- In the land that is now known as the United States, there are systems of power that grant privilege and access unequally – and we recognize that real inequities exist. This inequality is a result of systematic and structural racism throughout our history that continues today.

- MCCC acknowledges the historical human atrocities of genocide and slavery perpetrated against Native American and African American people:
  - genocide and slavery were foundational components of the development of the United States;
  - this legacy has had ongoing impacts and manifestations over many generations; and
  - this legacy is woven tightly into present day systems and culture, impacting families and communities today.
- It is necessary to acknowledge that the continuous trauma perpetuated against Native American and African American communities throughout the history of the U.S. is an important context when seeking to address child abuse and neglect and the many related health and social problems our communities face.
- Cultural equity is critical to the long-term viability of the nonprofit sector. Nonprofits such as MCCC have a responsibility to challenge inequities and encourage alternatives.
- We must all hold ourselves accountable, because acknowledging and challenging our inequities and working in partnership is how we will make change happen.
- Everyone deserves equal access to a full, vibrant creative life, which is essential to a healthy and democratic society.

## MODELING THROUGH ACTION

*To provide informed, authentic leadership for cultural equity, we strive to...*

- **Pursue cultural consciousness throughout our organization** through substantive learning and formal, transparent policies.
- **Acknowledge and dismantle any inequities** within our policies, systems, programs, and services, and report organization progress.
- **Commit time and resources to expand more diverse leadership** within our board, staff, and advisory bodies.
- **Embrace participants and alumni as critical partners** and invest in their long-term success to become contributors at all levels of our organization

One of the goals of MCCC is to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusiveness within the communities we serve. This will allow the free and open exchange of ideas and the establishment of relationships between people of diverse cultures. We acknowledge that these changes will not come without some levels of discomfort, so we agree that we must allow people the latitude to feel safe to express themselves freely, openly, and honestly without fear of reproach. Cultural equity, for MCCC, is a value system dependent on continual personal and organizational growth that seeks to understand, respect, appreciate, and embrace all. We are committed to how best to put these values into action and are encouraged by the hope that the actions born from these beliefs will communicate our vision to each other, to the communities we serve, and to society at large.