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Created July 2024

Conflict Resolution Policy

Purpose

GWDC recognizes that conflicts occur in organizations for various reasons. If conflicts are identified and recognized promptly and treated appropriately, the knowledge gained can enrich and improve our organization.

GWDC also recognizes that an unaddressed conflict, whether because it is avoided or improperly handled, can escalate causing people harm and having a negative impact on the organization. Prevention and early intervention efforts are key to fostering collaboration and to maintaining a healthy and respectful creative and work environment.

The purpose of this policy is thus to provide an effective, consistently applied, and transparent method to address conflicts and disputes. Such issues may arise in relation to GWDC functions, its governance, or the conduct of its Board of Directors, collective artists, contracted artists, program participants, members, and members of the public.

Applicable to:

A complaint under this policy may be made verbally or in writing by any director, collective artist, contracted artist, program participant, member, or by any member of the public, noting that:

Formal complaints of harassment, discrimination, or violence, based on protected grounds under the Alberta Human Rights Code or complaints regarding Occupational Health and Safety Act will be dealt with in accordance with the [Safe\(r\) Space Policy](#). In addition, nothing in this policy prevents or discourages anyone from filing an application with the Alberta Human Rights Commission on a matter related to Alberta's Human Rights Code.

Complaints arising out of disputes between GWDC and other organizations with which it is engaged in a shared project will be resolved through the terms of that agreement [ensure there is a dispute resolution clause in those agreements].

Credit:

This policy is based on a [guide](#) provided by the Media Arts Network of Ontario (MANO); Ontario's only arts service organization dedicated to furthering the work of media arts organizations, collectives, and the independent artists they represent. The guide was written by Sheila Wilmot, Consultant for the MANO Conflict Resolution Working Group, and adapted by GWDC.

Guiding Principles:

In-House Conflict Resolution: The skills and resources of GWDC will be developed and used to resolve conflicts in a manner that is interest-based, understanding-based, facilitative, collaborative and fully participative whenever possible. Seeking external advice and expertise is recommended in cases of formal complaints.

Personal Responsibility and Engagement: All parties to a complaint will actively participate, and strive to achieve a collaborative resolution and outcome at the earliest possible stage of the process.

Confidentiality: Information about a complaint will only be given to parties directly involved and to others on a need to know basis.

Transparency: The parties will be provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints. All parties will be provided with updates during review processes.

Timeliness: Complaints will be dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible.

Fairness: Review of complaints will be fair, impartial and respectful, allowing all parties to have their perspectives heard.

Thoroughness: Review of complaints will be thorough and as detailed as possible, based upon the information provided by the parties.

Accessible and User-Friendly: The process will be easily accessible and communicated to members. It is designed to be clear and as simple to follow as possible.

Training and Professional Development: The organization will be open to seeking out and securing board governance training and staff professional development regarding conflict resolution, should the need arise.

Definitions:

Conflict refers to an ongoing experience of varying degrees of tension, usually involving multiple events, and misunderstandings, possibly leading to the building up of layers of interpersonal discord. This policy uses both “conflict” and “dispute”(see below) without necessarily distinguishing between the two terms, since most people do not give them different meanings. Mediation processes will make the distinction as needed.

A **Board Advisor** is a GWDC Board member to which *unresolved* formal complaints are sent for review and recommendations, as per 2.07.2 or 2.08.4 below.

A **Complainant** is the individual lodging a complaint against another GWDC-related individual, policy or practice.

Discipline refers to the corrective action taken in respect to an individual, as a consequence of a formal complaint. Disciplinary measures are normally considered confidential, and the details are usually not shared with other parties to the conflict, except when considered necessary to advise other organizations or safeguard the public.

Disputes are specific disagreements between or among people on a particular topic. This policy uses both “conflict” (see above) and “dispute” without necessarily distinguishing between the 2 terms, since most people do not give them different meanings. Effective mediation processes will make the distinction as needed.

Collective Artist Advisor is an individual who has been appointed by the collective to act as an intermediary, convening authority, facilitator and/or mediator in the conflict resolution process, and to work with the parties to achieve a satisfactory outcome. The collective will annually appoint one or more **Collective Artist Advisors**, the appointments of which may be from the current Collective Artists.

A Respondent is an individual against whom a complaint has been made, and/or someone responsible for the policy or activity complained about.

Responsible Contact People are those who are accountable in Good Women Dance Collective for assisting in conflict resolution and addressing of formal complaints. They do not act as advocates for any party in the conflict. Their role is a neutral implementer of the policy.

Support people are individuals not connected to the conflicts or disputes being addressed, which either the complainant or respondent may choose to have in attendance at mediation meetings.

Responsibility for Implementation:

This policy respects the governance structure of Good Women Dance Collective, which provides that the Board of Directors is an advisory body and that all artistic and most operational decisions are made by Collective Artists.

Assigned Roles for the 2024/2025 Season:

- The **Collective Artist Advisor** for the 24/25 season is Alison Kause.
- The **Board Advisor** for the 24/25 season Sandra Olarte.

Procedures

1. Informal Complaints & Dispute Resolution

1.01 - An informal conflict resolution effort happens when a person seeks information, expresses their concern(s), engages the other party to the dispute in dialogue, and is able to resolve a dispute without recourse to a formal complaint.

1.02 – When disagreements arise, it is expected that the parties involved will attempt to speak with each other about their concerns. In addition to the following considerations, both parties in this conversation will use the Good Women Dance Collective’s [Code of Ethical Conduct](#) as their guide for how to conduct themselves in discussing the dispute.

- Choose a time and place to meet that is private and agreeable to both people.
- Allow a reasonable amount of time.
- The meeting is not about one person “winning” and the other “losing.” It is about coming to a mutual understanding. This takes patience and a willingness to listen to the other’s point of view and not to dismiss it as the “wrong” point of view.

- Speak directly from how you feel/think or felt/thought, and speak directly to the issue. By using “I” Statements and “Active Listening” techniques you can avoid belittling the other person, or dismissing their thoughts or feelings.
- Ideally you will be able to learn from the conversation how to avoid miscommunicating and/or misunderstanding in future. Helpful questions to this end include, “If what I / you said or did came across like that, what should I / we do to guard against this happening again?”

1.03- If step 1.02 does not work, the Complainant may ask for assistance from the appropriate Responsible Contact Person (see below). This may be done orally or in writing.

When communicating in writing the complainant will note in their correspondence that they are making an informal complaint and are communicating in order to get help to resolve it.

1.04 - Responsible Contact People for Informal Complaint:

(a) The Complainant may choose between the Responsible Contact People listed in 2.03, depending on their level of comfort and desired level of neutrality.

1.05 - If approached with an informal complaint, the Responsible Contact Person will inquire about any initial resolution efforts (as per 1.03), and will consult as needed with the **Collective Artist Advisor**.

1.06 - Efforts will be made by the Responsible Contact Person to resolve the matter informally within the first two (2) weeks after the complaint is made.

1.06.1 – The Responsible Contact Person will have a conversation with each party separately to:

- a) discuss their perspective on and interests engaged in the dispute, and;
- b) to review the internal **informal dispute resolution** methods available to them (as per 1.06.2).

1.06.2 - Both parties will be invited to participate in processes such as informal meetings, negotiations, facilitated meetings, or shuttle or in-person mediation. If there is more than one Complainant or Respondent this may involve multiple, separate meetings. If one party refuses participation in either facilitated discussions or a mediation process, see 2.01.

1.06.3 - Depending on their training and neutrality, either the Responsible Contact Person or the **Board Advisor** can act as facilitator or mediator in the chosen process.

1.06.4 – If the chosen process yields an acceptable informal outcome to both parties, the matter will be considered to be resolved.

2. Formal Complaints and Resolution

2.01 - If informal resolution efforts do not achieve an acceptable outcome in a timely fashion, or to the satisfaction of the Complainant, the Complainant may submit a written formal complaint. A formal complaint requires written submission.

2.02 - A formal, written complaint will be submitted to one of the Responsible Contact People below. The written complaint will include:

(a) The Complainant's name;

(b) Detailed information about what the issue is, the Respondent's name, what has taken place, where, and when;

(c) Details of all prior efforts to achieve a resolution;

(d) The specific outcome(s) the Complainant is seeking. Complaints that do not provide all of this information will be considered incomplete.

2.03 – Responsible Contact People for Complaints:

(a) Collective Artist Contacts - Contact Alison Kause at alison@goodwomen.ca; Alida Kendell at alida@goodwomen.ca; Deviani at Deviani@goodwomen.ca; or Molly at Molly@goodwomen.ca

(b) Board member as Contact Person - Contact Sandra Olarte at olarte@gmail.com

(c) External/Neutral Contact Person - Contact Ainsley Hillyard at ainsleyjanehillyard@gmail.com

2.04 - The Responsible Contact Person will immediately acknowledge to the Complainant the receipt of the complaint.

2.05 - The Responsible Contact Person will forward the complaint to the **Collective Artist Advisor** (if not self) within one (1) week of receipt. The **Collective Artist Advisor** will then proceed as follows:

2.05.1 - The **Collective Artist Advisor** will review the complaint to ensure all information is included as per 2.02 above, and that enough information is present to be able to assess the situation and respond. If not, the complainant will be advised. The review will include assessing and making note of organizational by-laws, policies and codes that might have been violated.

If the issues raised by the complainant include matters that directly engage the Safe(r) Spaces Policy, reports of harassment or discrimination based on protected grounds under the Alberta Human Rights Act, or report incidents of Workplace Violence (as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act), the relevant policies and procedures will be followed. The **Collective Artist Advisor** will immediately refer to those policies and procedures, and advise the Complainant of this. Immediate courses of action may include separation of parties and initiation of a third party investigation.

The review may also include seeking advice from an external source of expertise. If formal complaints involve multiple Complainants or Respondents that are staff and/or directors, or are non-Human Resource contract disputes, the **Collective Artist Advisor** is encouraged to seek external legal advice. Such complaints may then be referred to some form of external adjudication process.

2.06 - Within one (1) week of complaint receipt, the **Collective Artist Advisor** will:

- (i) inform the Complainant that they have carried out an initial review of their complaint;
- (ii) provide the Complainant with a copy of this Policy;
- (iii) review the informal dispute resolution process (see 1.06.2), and;
- (iv) communicate additional information required, including:
 - (a) Any referral of the complaint to a separate process, as per 2.05.1.
 - (b) Available informal or assisted resolution options as set out in this Policy, section 1.
 - (c) That processes in relation to this policy cannot result in an award of damages or compensation to the Complainant, Respondent, or anyone else.
 - (d) That processes in relation to this policy may or may not result in disciplinary measures against the Respondent.
 - (e) That the Respondent will receive a copy of the Complaint (with the Complainant's name) if it is not resolved through informal resolution mechanisms.

2.07 - Notice to Respondent (Offer of Informal Dispute Resolution)

2.07.1 – Consistent with the timeline in 2.06, and when the appointed **Collective Artist Advisor** is satisfied the requirements outlined above are met, and has determined that written complaint disclosure will not jeopardize the potential for an Informal Dispute Resolution process, the **Collective Artist Advisor** will send the respondent:

- (a) A copy of the complaint;
- (b) Possibly supporting materials;
- (c) An assessment of organizational policies and/or codes of practice that may be engaged;
- (d) A copy of this policy;
- (e) A request for a response within two (2) weeks;
- (f) An offer to facilitate Informal Dispute Resolution

2.07.2 - If the Respondent does not reply within one (2) week, the **Collective Artist Advisor** will notify the remaining Collective Artists, who will then decide a course of action with the information provided to date. They may consult with the **Board Advisor** or **External Neutral Contact** person, as needed.

2.08 - Initial Response to the Complainant (Offer of Informal Dispute Resolution)

2.08.1 - Upon receipt of a response from the Respondent, the **Collective Artist Advisor** will send to the complainant:

- (a) A copy of the response;
- (b) Possibly supporting materials;
- (c) An assessment of organizational policies and/or codes of practice that may be engaged;
- (d) An offer to facilitate Informal Dispute Resolution.

2.08.2 - If both parties accept the offer of Informal Dispute Resolution, the **Collective Artist Advisor** will arrange within one (1) week to facilitate the Informal Dispute Resolution process. This may include such processes as informal meetings, negotiation, facilitated meetings or shuttle or in-person mediation. The **Collective Artist Advisor** may engage a mediator external to the organization.

2.08.3 - Any agreed resolution of the complaint arrived at through Informal Dispute Resolution shall be documented in writing and signed by both Complainant and Respondent. These Minutes of Settlement shall be confidential, and items within strictly shared with the **Collective Artist Advisor**, Staff, Board, legal counsel or other parties that need to know to carry out their organizational duties. Considerations when making an agreement should include:

- Is the agreement within the scope of the parties' decision-making powers in relation to their organizational role?
- Is the agreement realistic and durable?

- Does the agreement in any way compromise Good Women Dance Collective?
- Are there elements of the agreement that impact on Good Women Dance Collective's Organization's operations, policies, reputation, external relationships or public perceptions?

2.08.4 - If both parties do not accept the offer of Informal Dispute Resolution, or if Informal Dispute Resolution does not resolve the complaint, the **Collective Artist Advisor** will immediately forward the Complainant's and Respondent's documentation and the **Collective Artist Advisor's** report on dispute resolution attempts to date, to the **Board Advisor**. The **Board Advisor** may then seek advice from other external sources of expertise. **Collective and Board Advisor** will decide on a course of action with the information provided. Such action may include, but is not limited to:

- Separation of parties via work reassignment or changing of scheduling;
- Having a meeting with each party to discuss best practices for dispute resolution;
- Directions on training;
- Implementation of organizational practice and policy changes;
- Referral to Harassment and Discrimination policy and procedures

2.08.5 - The **Collective and Board Advisor** decide that disciplinary action is needed. Such action may include, but is not limited to:

(a) For non-collective artists:

- expulsion from events and classes
- cancellation of contracts
- exclusion from future GWDC events and initiatives. Individuals expelled from events, classes, or other activities may not receive a refund

(b) For Collective Artists:

- Being allotted less administrative hours
- Delegating tasks to other collective artists
- Taking a step back from artistic and collective duties (this might include: not participating in performances, temporarily suspending the taking on of new administrative tasks, etc.)
- In severe cases where conflict is not resolved via the full complaint process outlined in the Conflict Resolution Policy to the detriment of the organization, termination might be necessary.