# ACCESSIBILITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION POLICY

**PORCUPINE UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Policy owner:** PUFC Board of Directors
**Approval date:** _____ Effective date: _____
**Next review:** Within 12 months of approval

## 1. Purpose

Porcupine United Football Club (PUFC) is committed to providing a soccer environment that is accessible, inclusive, welcoming, respectful, and safe. Every participant should have the opportunity to belong, be valued, have their voice heard, and participate in a way that is meaningful to them.

This policy establishes the club's commitment to identifying and reducing barriers in its programs, services, facilities, communications, events, and volunteer opportunities.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all PUFC players and prospective players, parents and guardians, coaches, team officials, board members, volunteers, contractors, spectators, and other individuals participating in or representing the club.

It applies to practices, games, tournaments, travel, meetings, events, fundraising, registration, team selection, club communications, and club-related online spaces.

## 3. Guiding Principles and Definitions

**PUFC is guided by these principles:**

- Accessibility means identifying and reducing barriers so people can access and participate in club activities.
- Inclusion means creating an environment where people experience belonging, respect, and meaningful participation.
- Equity means providing people with the support or adjustments they need to have fair opportunities. This may require different supports for different people.
- Diversity means recognizing and valuing the range of identities, backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and circumstances in our community.
- Accountability means taking concerns seriously, reviewing decisions, and improving practices over time.

Accessibility is not limited to physical access. Inclusion is an ongoing process that requires attention to both club practices and participants' experiences.

## 4. Fair and Respectful Treatment

PUFC will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, religious intolerance, or exclusionary conduct in club activities or club-related communications.

Participants will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of disability, physical or mental health needs, age, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, Indigenous identity, cultural background, language, religion or belief, family circumstances, or financial means.

All participants are expected to follow the club's applicable codes of conduct and policies. Disrespectful conduct may be addressed under the club's discipline and complaint procedures.

## 5. Accessibility and Accommodation

PUFC will make reasonable efforts to understand and respond to individual accessibility needs. Players and families are encouraged to tell the club about requested accommodations as early as practical, while recognizing that a request may arise at any time.

**Possible supports may include, depending on individual circumstances and available resources:**

- reasonable adjustments to drills, activities, instructions, equipment, or participation methods;
- additional explanation, visual instructions, predictable routines, or communication supports;
- consideration of mobility, sensory, intellectual, developmental, behavioural, or other disability-related needs;
- accessible meeting or event arrangements where available;
- reasonable flexibility around breaks, scheduling, or participation where feasible;
- discussion of suitable equipment, support persons, or other adaptations.

PUFC will discuss requests respectfully with the participant and, where appropriate, their parent or guardian. The club will consider the person's needs, safety, dignity, privacy, the nature of the activity, applicable competition rules, facility limitations, and available resources. Practical alternatives will be explored if a requested arrangement cannot reasonably be provided as proposed.

No player will be excluded or discouraged solely because they have disclosed a disability or requested an accommodation. If a particular activity cannot safely or appropriately be adapted, PUFC will explain the concern and consider whether another meaningful form of participation is available.

## 6. Financial Barriers to Participation

PUFC recognizes that registration fees, uniforms, footwear, equipment, transportation, accommodation, and other costs can prevent children and youth from participating in sport.

Where possible and subject to available club funds and approved processes, PUFC will consider confidential requests for assistance or flexible arrangements. Options may include payment arrangements, support with required equipment, referrals to community assistance programs, or other practical solutions.

Requests for financial assistance will be handled respectfully and privately. Families will not be required to disclose financial circumstances to coaches, teammates, or other families. Assistance is not guaranteed and depends on available resources and any applicable program criteria.

PUFC may share information about external assistance programs, including KidSport and Canadian Tire Jumpstart. Families should confirm eligibility and application requirements directly with those programs.

## 7. Inclusive Programming and Participation

PUFC will make reasonable efforts to provide positive, enjoyable, developmentally appropriate, and safe soccer experiences.

**Coaches and team personnel are encouraged to:**

- use respectful, age-appropriate, and inclusive language;
- consider different learning styles, abilities, confidence levels, and development needs;
- provide clear instructions and constructive feedback;

- promote teamwork, belonging, fair play, and meaningful involvement;
- avoid assumptions about a participant's abilities, family, culture, identity, or financial circumstances;
- respond promptly to exclusion, bullying, harassment, or discriminatory behaviour;
- consider reasonable adjustments while maintaining safety and applicable soccer rules.

## 8. Gender Equity, Gender Identity and Expression

PUFC is committed to an environment where girls, women, boys, men, and gender-diverse participants are treated with dignity and have fair opportunities to participate, contribute, coach, volunteer, and lead.

Participants will be addressed respectfully, including by their name and pronouns where known. A participant's gender identity or expression must not be a reason for teasing, harassment, exclusion, or unwanted disclosure of personal information.

Questions about team placement, competition eligibility, uniforms, facilities, or changing arrangements will be handled respectfully and privately, taking into account the participant's dignity, privacy, safety, applicable governing-body rules, and relevant legal requirements. PUFC will seek guidance from the appropriate governing body where necessary.

## 9. Cultural, Indigenous, Religious and Newcomer Inclusion

PUFC recognizes that cultural background, language, Indigenous identity, newcomer experiences, and religious beliefs may affect how individuals experience sport and what supports may help them participate.

Where reasonably possible, the club will consider requests relating to religious observance, prayer, fasting, dietary needs, dress requirements, scheduling, and privacy. Requests will be discussed respectfully and without assumptions.

PUFC is committed to learning about the history and ongoing experiences of Indigenous peoples and to treating Indigenous participants, families, and communities with respect. The club will seek opportunities to listen, build relationships, and support meaningful participation.

PUFC will make reasonable efforts to communicate clearly with families who are new to Canada or unfamiliar with organized soccer, including explaining registration, team expectations, costs, schedules, equipment, and club processes.

## 10. Mental Health and Participant Wellbeing

PUFC recognizes that mental wellbeing is part of a positive sport experience. Coaches and volunteers are not expected to diagnose or provide clinical treatment.

Adults representing the club should listen respectfully, respond calmly to concerns, avoid stigmatizing language, and refer significant concerns to a parent or guardian or appropriate support person, while respecting privacy and safeguarding obligations.

If there is an immediate risk of harm or a medical emergency, the supervising adult must follow emergency procedures and contact emergency services when required.

## 11. Facilities, Events and Communications

When selecting or using facilities, PUFC will consider accessibility, washroom and changing arrangements, seating, parking, routes of access, sensory environment, and other needs brought to the club's attention.

Club communications should use respectful and inclusive language and provide key information clearly and in a timely way. Where practical, the club will consider accessible formats and communication needs.

At tournaments, travel, fundraising, meetings, and social events, PUFC representatives are expected to uphold the same standards of respect, inclusion, and accessibility that apply to regular team activities.

## 12. Roles and Responsibilities

### Board of Directors

- promote and oversee implementation of this policy;
- consider accessibility and inclusion when making club decisions, approving programs, setting fees, and allocating resources;
- receive or assign responsibility for complaints and accommodation requests;
- review concerns and identify opportunities for improvement.

### Coaches and Team Personnel

- create respectful and inclusive team environments;
- make reasonable efforts to support agreed accommodations and meaningful participation;
- address or report discriminatory, harassing, or exclusionary behaviour;
- protect personal information and share it only where necessary and appropriate.

### Players and Participants

- treat others with respect and help create a welcoming team environment;
- refrain from bullying, harassment, discrimination, and exclusion;
- tell a coach, parent/guardian, or club representative if they experience or witness conduct that conflicts with this policy.

### Parents and Guardians

- share relevant accommodation or access requests with the club where they feel comfortable doing so;
- treat players, families, coaches, officials, volunteers, and opponents respectfully;
- support their child in following club expectations and raising concerns appropriately.

### All Volunteers and Club Representatives

- model respectful conduct and inclusive language;
- complete relevant education or training when requested by the club;
- take concerns seriously and refer them through the appropriate club process.

## 13. Requests, Concerns and Reporting

An athlete, parent/guardian, volunteer, or other participant may raise an accessibility request or concern with a coach, team manager, or member of the PUFC Board. If the concern involves that person, it may be raised with another board member.

### PUFC will aim to:

- listen respectfully and without retaliation;
- clarify the concern and the outcome being requested;
- limit the sharing of personal information to those who need it to respond;
- consider the circumstances fairly and, where appropriate, consult the participant or family about possible solutions;
- take appropriate steps to address discriminatory or harmful conduct;
- communicate the outcome or next steps to the people directly involved, to the extent appropriate.

Concerns involving abuse, harassment, serious misconduct, or immediate safety risks must also be reported and managed under applicable safeguarding, discipline, complaint, and emergency procedures. Nothing in this policy

prevents a person from contacting emergency services, child-protection authorities, law enforcement, or an applicable sport governing body where appropriate.

Retaliation against anyone who raises a concern in good faith or participates in a review is not acceptable.

## 14. Education, Accountability and Continuous Improvement

PUFC recognizes that creating an accessible and inclusive club is an ongoing process. The club will encourage board members, coaches, and volunteers to build awareness, challenge assumptions, recognize unconscious bias, and respond constructively when practices or decisions create barriers.

Where practical, PUFC may provide or encourage relevant education and resources for coaches and volunteers, including diversity and inclusion training, disability-inclusive coaching resources, and education on gender equity, cultural awareness, and youth mental wellbeing.

The club will seek feedback from participants and families and consider it when reviewing programs, services, facilities, communications, and club practices.

## 15. Policy Review and Distribution

This policy will be provided or made available to board members, coaches, team personnel, volunteers, players, and parents/guardians. It will be reviewed at least annually and after significant concerns or changes in applicable governing-body guidance.

Any amendments must be approved through the club's appropriate governance process.

## Board Approval

Approved by the Porcupine United Football Club Board of Directors on: _____

Board representative: _____ Signature: _____