

# Fireweed Food Co-op Safe(r) Spaces Policy

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This is our most recent version of this document, updated on March 8, 2021.

This policy is a living document. We will update it periodically to include changes as they come up in the course of our learning and growing as an organization. We will formally review and update it at least once per year via committee review and community feedback survey. We are always open to feedback and input from our community at any time (options for feedback in the third paragraph below!)

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## Safe(r) Spaces Policy

FFC strives to create and foster welcoming community spaces for people of all ages, gender identities, cultural identities, abilities, and sexual orientations. We encourage everyone within these spaces to join us in this effort, and we will not tolerate any forms of discrimination, oppression or harassment, including but not limited to: sexism; racism; white supremacy; homophobia; xenophobia; transphobia; classism; ableism; fatphobia or ageism.

If you witness or experience harm, harassment or discrimination in our spaces, we will do our best to intervene or respond in a safe and non-escalatory manner. There are many ways to notify us of an incident: in person to one of our staff or volunteers, via an anonymous Safer Spaces feedback box at the SOFM, via an anonymous [online form](#), or via email to any of our board or staff.

## What We Expect from Our Community

Our community includes all those who are present in Fireweed Food Co-op spaces, including Farmers Market vendors, Farmers Market attendees, anyone (including Suppliers) visiting or working in our Food Hub warehouse as well as Fireweed board, staff and volunteers.

A thriving and inclusive food system starts with mutual respect, cooperation and generosity, and therefore we expect the best from our community members. At the very least, this includes treating one another with decency, respecting physical and emotional boundaries, and using correct names and pronouns at all times.

However, while we always expect the best, there are some types of behaviours that will never be tolerated in our spaces, and may merit removal from the space. They include but are not limited to:

- Cultural Appropriation, i.e., the selling of a product from another culture's spiritual or cultural symbols, or traditions. (E.g. Dreamcatchers, Smudge sticks, Ceremonial Sage, Mandalas, Eagle feathers, Bindis, bannock, etc.)
- Harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, persistent microaggressions in the form of jokes or silencing comments, unwanted physical contact, or aggressive behaviour of any kind.
- Transphobia or homophobia, including jokes, derogatory language or the intentional misuse of someone's pronouns. Please remember to ask or use they/them pronouns if you are unsure of someone's proper pronoun. Please consider helping normalize the asking of someone's pronouns, or use they/them pronouns if you are unsure.
- Name-calling or slurs, including racist, ableist, prejudice, classist or fatphobic jokes, images or comments.

We also have detailed agreements for the Vendors of SOFM and Suppliers to Fireweed Food Hub which go into greater detail about our expectations on these matters, as well as other considerations including the fair treatment of workers.

### **What Our Community Can Expect from Us**

Fireweed Food Co-op will strive at all times and in an active way to ensure that our spaces are as safe, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and fun as possible for everyone! We are currently in the process of developing staff and volunteer training for the summer market season that will help us uphold our safe(r) spaces policy and respond to incidents in a non-violent and de-escalatory manner.

We are committed to listening and being open to criticisms about the ways we do things. We acknowledge that anti-oppression work is ongoing and requires self-reflection which can be uncomfortable at times. When criticism or complaints about our conduct or policies arise, we promise to do our best to create the appropriate spaces for dialogue and to take follow up action in good faith.

If a community member behaves in a way that is against the spirit of this policy or causes harm to anyone, FFC staff or volunteers will take appropriate action, including possibly asking that party to remove themselves from the space temporarily, or even permanently as per the process outlined below.

While we acknowledge the limitations of our ability to enforce these rules, we will commit to exhausting all alternative options to calling the police for any incidents or disturbances, acknowledging that for many in our community, the police present a greater threat than they do a solution.

To this end, we have created a clear procedure for reporting harm or grievances which prioritizes the needs of the person who has been harmed. We are also working on gathering a group of local community members near the Farmers Market who might be interested in being "on call" to support in the case that an incident arises.

**Procedures for responding to feedback or reporting of harm:**

1. Reporting of a real-time incident at SOFM (or other FFC space):

- FFC staff/ volunteers will talk to the person harmed, and offer to provide a quiet/ private space to talk (ie. inside the LRCC building). FFC staff will ask their permission to write down the details of the incident in an Incident Report, with the option provided to omit any details they are not comfortable having recorded. FFC staff will ask permission of the person harmed whether they would like us to follow up with the person who has caused harm, either via an anonymized complaint, or detailing the specific incident.
- If the person harmed does not prefer us to follow up with the harm-doer, the FFC staff/ volunteer will use their best judgement to determine whether the harm-doer poses a continued threat to others, and if not, will support the victim's wish. FFC will record these details, anonymously if desired, in the Incident Report.
- If FFC staff/ volunteers do follow up with the harm-doer, they will also offer a quiet/ private location to talk (with a third person present if necessary), and will inform them of the impacts of their actions and how they have broken the Safe(r) Spaces Policy. They will be given a print-out list of resources and information (which will be on-hand at the Info Tent/ in the Food Hub office) that can help create more understanding of their harmful behaviour.
- If the person is able to understand, apologize, and promise to not repeat the harmful behaviour, they may be allowed to remain on the premises, or be asked to leave but allowed to come back a different day. FFC will record these details in the Incident Report.
- If the harm-doer remains unapologetic, aggressive or in any other way a persistent threat, they will be asked to leave the space temporarily or permanently. FFC will record these details in the Incident Report.
- In the case of someone being permanently banned from the space, an FFC staff or volunteer will either take a photo of the harm doer if it is safe to do so, or write down a visual description of the harm doer and keep it on record for security purposes.

2. Reporting of a past incident:

- If FFC receives a report or complaint about an incident that has occurred in the past, it will respond in the following ways:
- If the report was anonymous, we will investigate the incident to the best of our abilities, and follow up with anyone named in it, taking action to the best of our abilities. All actions taken will be documented in an Incident Report.

- If the report was not anonymous, FFC will follow up with the reporter, and follow the same procedures as outlined in Scenario 1, above.
3. Receiving a complaint about FFC, whether organization, board, or staff:
- If FFC receives a report or complaint about its own conduct, or the conduct of a volunteer, board member or staff member, it will respond in one of the following ways:
  - If the complaint is about FFC as a whole, the complaint will be assigned to the Safe(r) Spaces Committee for review, with the responsibility to investigate the issue and generate recommendations for follow up action no later than the next board meeting. (This might include meeting/ talking with the person who made the complaint if they included their name). FFC is then responsible for implementing the recommendations, and including details of the incident in a Safer Spaces report at the next AGM.
  - If the complaint is about a specific FFC volunteer, board member, or staff person, the complaint will be assigned to the Safe(r) Spaces Committee for review, with the caveat that if the person in question is on that committee, they will not be involved in the review process. The Committee will be responsible for investigating the issue and generating recommendations for follow up action no later than the next board meeting. (This might include meeting/ talking with the person who made the complaint if they included their name). FFC is then responsible for implementing the recommendations, and including details of the incident in a Safer Spaces report at the next AGM.
  - In either case, if the person making the complaint against FFC or its representatives is unsatisfied by the actions taken by FFC, we encourage them to follow up, and we will be glad to explore options for mediation and/ or accountability processes with a third party present.

### **Acknowledgement of Work Still to be Done**

Committing to making our spaces safe(r) means that, as an organization and as a community, we are also committing to working against the systems of oppression that operate in the society we live in. Before we can truly work against these systems of oppression, we must acknowledge and commit to deepening our understanding of the ways we are already participating in these systems, benefitting from them, and even feeding them. We want to do this openly here in the hopes of making this kind of self-audit more commonplace, since we acknowledge that all those working within or surrounded by oppressive systems must often make difficult, imperfect choices. This is not to let any of us off the hook; quite the opposite! If we are committing to make saf-er spaces, that means that we commit to the *process* of making them safer-- in an ongoing, meaningful, long-term fashion. We are committed to change while staying engaged; not stepping back from

responsibility, but moving aside or even stepping forward to share space. As an organization operating on stolen land who works with food, we take our cues from the Indigenous leaders of the #landback movement\*, who state that decolonizing is more about changing relationships than it is about disengaging. Here is our self-audit.

We are a white settler-founded organization that does its work on stolen land, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation. Many of these people were displaced and killed in the still-unacknowledged genocide that led to the founding of so-called Canada. As an organization that works with farmers, a majority of whom are white settler farmers, we are contributing to the ongoing occupation of Indigenous land under Western constructs of land ownership. Currently both our full time paid staff are white. We acknowledge how this affects and limits the viewpoints brought into the operational work of our organization, and we know this has to change.

Though we are a nonprofit, community service cooperative, we are still a business that very much functions within capitalism and relies on the capitalist, colonial, white supremacist imperative of generating profits and revenues (even via grant-funding) above all else. We are beginning to resist this by putting an equal focus into food security work and making local food more accessible to those who cannot afford it at market rates.

We do this through our current Waste-Not local food hampers, providing 25 food boxes a week to households in partnership with the Mutual Aid Society, as well as our Pay It Forward currency program at the South Osborne Farmers' Market. However, we acknowledge that the end goal must be more than simply food security and the charity model as it exists. It must be food sovereignty-- in other words, abolishing the systems of oppression that dispossess all people of their ability to access, grow and enjoy the foods that they choose, and instead, participating in rebuilding new systems together. We very much hope to play a collaborative role in this long-term rebuilding process.

Though we are working towards non-hierarchical and lateral power systems in our organization, we still operate on the day to day using communication styles and meeting structures that require a certain level of knowledge, time and privilege to partake in. Our organizational culture is a one that is most comfortable to those who have already worked in nonprofits or who have post secondary education, creating a feedback loop that consciously and unconsciously influences who we seek for-- and who feels most comfortable as-- a member of our team. We struggle to balance the constant feeling of not having enough resources with the desire to employ those who may need different or additional supports to succeed on our team. We have made hiring decisions on both sides of this equation.

All these pressures and systems of oppression which are present in our society and in our organization now take the form of late-stage global capitalism which exploits land, people, and other species to maximize profits for multinational corporations. We are now facing impending ecological, social, economic and political global crises as the result. In the face of this, the question we ask ourselves is: how do we stay engaged with the parts of the current

system we have the power to influence, while deliberately resisting replicating these oppressive systems?

The answer to this firstly includes bringing more anticolonial, anticapitalist voices to our team, which we are committed to doing actively in the recruitment of new board members and staff. We are currently launching our [Lateral Root Network](#), a community advisory committee for our Food Hub which will provide a third-party body for feedback and direct guidance from those in our community who are impacted by our work while compensating them for their time. Feedback from the committee will be posted publicly, and our board and staff will be accountable to pursuing their suggestions.

We are also taking on this process: developing a Safe(r) Spaces policy through which we hope to generate more than just practical rules, but a blueprint for ongoing accountability. These steps are what we are taking so far to resist replicating systems of oppression while unavoidably working within them. We will be taking more steps. Suggestions are always welcome.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that liberation from oppressive systems must be collective, or it is not liberation at all. Just as this document is a living document, so too is our cooperative. As we listen, learn and grow as a community, we are open to the changes that we will inevitably go through as we work towards that collective liberation. We are committed to doing this work at the speed of trust.\*\*

### **Acknowledgements & Credits**

We would like to acknowledge and credit the facilitators at Red Tent Winnipeg who helped our board and staff create and develop this policy.

We would also like to credit the following organizations for their Safe(r) Spaces policies which have been an inspiration while writing ours:

- [No Fun Club](#)
- Harvest Moon Festival

\* credits: [Ronald Gamblin](#), [Indigenous Kinship Collective](#), [Landback editorial collective](#)

\*\* credit: [adrienne maree brown](#), [Stephen R. Covey](#)