

Chilmark Town Affairs Council Plan Going Forward

The Chilmark Town Affairs Council (CTAC) is committed to creating an environment in which all members of our community can thrive and that all children feel safe and supported while participating in our summer programs.¹ It is our priority to welcome to the Chilmark Community Center children of diverse backgrounds, races, cultures, ethnicities, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation and abilities.

For 64 years, the Chilmark Community Center (CCC) has offered summer programs that often have been a foundational experience for the many children who participated in them and for their families. Lifetime and intergenerational friendships have been forged without class markers and, for many, it has helped build their community in Chilmark and beyond. CTAC has prided itself on creating a welcoming and relaxed environment for island and summer children in which they can freely explore recreational and athletic activities. But for too long we have relied on the model that all we need to do is open our doors and children will come. We have not been intentional about living our values, and our programs should reflect the diversity of the island and the changed environment in which we are operating. We wish to encourage and welcome to our programs engagement with the Black, Indigenous, and Brazilian communities of Martha's Vineyard and this plan is designed to help us achieve this goal.

Our country and our community are now, at last, engaged in necessary conversations about racial injustice and inequalities, particularly about Anti-Black racism following George Floyd's murder, and also about racial injustices committed against Indigenous Peoples, Asian Americans, and Hispanics. We are aware of the prevalence of gender stereotyping and religious intolerance. It is the time for CTAC to take important, intentional steps to create a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment.

The steps we outline below are the beginning of a process. We talked with many experts on the island and beyond in developing this outline. We are extremely grateful to them for their candor and selfless willingness to help us be better. As this plan is built out and the process continues over time, and as implementation begins, CTAC will continue to seek expert advice and partnerships.

We see this process as putting CTAC and the CCC on a sustainable path for the future. This journey is part of being a responsible organization in our community, and will help equip us, our children and grandchildren to be better members of the community. We hope, too, that we can set an example for Chilmark, the island as a whole and other organizations.

I. **Building Diversity**

CTAC: Building a diverse organization begins with building a diverse Board - diversity in terms of expanding the number of BIPOC members; and including members with different backgrounds, experiences and expertise, and of different ages reflecting the multigenerational nature of the Center's programs and reach. Board candidates should have a history of engagement and familiarity with CCC and its programs, and a demonstrated commitment to the Center.

Diversifying the Board in this manner will strengthen and revitalize it and is an immediate priority.

We have made an initial step to rebuild the Board by electing a diverse slate of four new Board Members on September 29, 2021.

Staff and Counselors: We will expand staff recruitment efforts across the island and work with

¹ While CCC provides some programming for adults (including tennis and fitness classes), the primary focus of this plan is on its summer children's programming which runs for approximately 6-7 weeks (early July through mid-August). The cornerstone of the program is a morning summer camp for children ages 6-14 and a preschool program for children ages 3-5. Afternoon programs for children are often offered, too.

other community organizations to tap into Indigenous, Black, Brazilian and other networks. We will also seek to address the potential for gender biases in recruitment. We will review our salary structure to ensure that we pay a fair wage to allow counselors to work in our programs regardless of their economic status.

We also recommend that CTAC and the CCC establish a *Recruitment Sub-Committee* to actively assist the Executive Director in recruitment of counselors and staff with a particular focus on promoting diversity.

Campers: Our traditional promotion methods will be intentionally expanded across the island, working with other community organizations, to among other things, encompass Indigenous, Black and Brazilian networks.

Funding: We will seek to expand and fund an existing scholarship program to facilitate access for those who cannot afford our programs.

II. Reflecting Our Values

Our Values Statement

Chilmark Community Center expects all participants in its programs, including campers, counselors, staff, and adult members to engage in positive interpersonal relationships including being inclusive and welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds, races, cultures, ethnicities, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation and abilities. Harassment and bullying will not be tolerated. Physical, verbal or emotional abuse or any speech, action or behavior that creates a hostile or intimidating environment and does not treat all participants with respect is not allowed. Those who are unable to respect and abide by these values cannot participate in CCC programs.

Reporting Violations of Our Values

Reports of inappropriate behavior among campers that violates *Our Values Statement* as set forth above can be made to counselors, staff or the Executive Director, either orally or in writing, by campers, other counselors or parents/guardians. We will also consider having Incident Reports for campers (or their parents) to complete. Counselors will be expected to address misbehavior in violation of *Our Values Statement* whenever they see it, regardless of whether it is officially reported. Counselors will be expected to immediately report any violation that involves bullying or harassment to the Executive Director or to a designated senior staff member, who will consider if such behavior is bias-related.²

Addressing Violations³

The Center will take appropriate and prompt action to address behavior that violates *Our Values Statement*. In cases involving minor conflicts or transgressions, the goal will be to use positive behavioral interventions to build bridges and deepen understanding among campers, rather than to punish. Where appropriate, conflict may be addressed by allowing those who were affected by the conflict the opportunity to share the experience in a safe and facilitated manner. In determining whether a violation is minor, counselors will inform a designated senior staff member or the Executive Director and consult with them on the appropriate response. In determining the response, they will consider factors such as the ages of the campers, the seriousness of the

² Not all bullying and harassment are bias-related. Bias-related incidents involve bullying or harassment based on bias, prejudice or hate due to race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.

³ In implementing this plan, the Executive Director in consultation with the Board will develop more detailed guidelines for what constitutes violations, how to address serious violations including the investigation process, procedures to follow, and consequences, including violations by staff and counselors.

behavior, and whether the campers have been involved in previous violations of the Center's values statement.

Incidents involving more serious violations of *Our Values Statement*, including but not limited to incidents that may involve bias-related bullying or harassment, will be promptly reported to the Executive Director. In such cases, the Center will conduct a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation to determine what happened and whether there was a serious violation of the Center's values statement. The procedure for handling such investigations will be determined by the Executive Director in consultation with one or more designated CTAC Board members, who will have appropriate experience and training in such issues.

If the investigation determines that a serious violation of the Center's values statement has occurred, then appropriate remedial action to end such behavior, prevent it from recurring, and eliminate the intimidating or hostile environment, potentially including dismissal from the program, will be taken. The Executive Director will update the Board on a timely basis on the results of the investigation and the remedial actions taken.

Commitment

Upon registering for Community Center programs, parents/guardians, campers and adult members will be asked to agree to *Our Values Statement* and to the procedures for reporting and addressing violations. Similarly, all counselors and staff will be asked to agree to *Our Values Statement* and to the procedures for reporting and addressing violations. This is necessary to ensure that those participating in Center programs understand the values and expectations of the CCC and for the organization to have the ability to resolve conflict in the manner described above.

Creating a Positive, Inclusive and Respectful Environment

While it is important to have procedures in place to manage incidents when things go wrong, more fundamentally, CCC seeks to create an environment where all participants in our programs feel safe, respected and supported. Accordingly, outlined here are measures to:

- Incorporate diversity training for staff and counselors.
- Discuss and reinforce *Our Values Statement* with all campers.
- Build understanding and knowledge of diverse cultures into our programs.
- Earmark and train staff with the explicit responsibility for modeling and promoting inclusive play and deterring bullying of any kind or harassment.

III. Staffing

Recruitment of Executive Director Priority is on recruitment of an Executive Director (ED) who has the expertise and leadership capacity to help us further build out and implement the process and steps outlined in this plan. We will seek a professional who has experience in building diverse, inclusive and equitable organizations. The ED job description has been rewritten to reflect the skills we are seeking and our focus on creating a positive, inclusive and respectful organization. Considering the range of responsibilities, this may be a full time, year-round position. This position will be widely publicized through a broad range of networks throughout the island, and perhaps off-island, and with our partner organizations.

Staffing Plan

We will review the current staffing structure (ED, Administrative Staff, Directors, Senior Counselors/Counselors, Volunteers) to determine if revisions are needed in light of the changes

embodied in this plan. Our staffing plan will be clearly communicated to parents to ensure they understand who will be responsible for their children.

IV. Building Awareness/ Expanding Our Focus

Training and integrating diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) content into our programs will help ensure that our community recognizes and appreciates different identities and is equipped with the skills and knowledge to engage in respectful, meaningful and constructive dialogue around diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Accordingly, we will seek to partner with a community organization to:

1. Provide DEI training to CTAC Board members, the ED and key staff and counselors to build cultural sensitivity, develop the skills needed to discuss race and racism, identify beliefs and practices that cause harm, understand the role of unearned advantages based on identity, and examine our attitudes and actions around race.
2. Include DEI training as part of the orientation program for counselors and staff members.
3. Provide all new campers an age-appropriate orientation on Monday morning in CCC values (*Our Values Statement*) and the conflict resolution process.
4. Develop partnership opportunities with other island organizations to enrich our programming, potentially including:
 - a. Content on the island's land, history and first peoples
 - b. Understanding of the island's Black history and summer home as a safe haven
 - c. Environmental protection and restoring ecosystems
 - d. Enhanced appreciation of ethnic diversity.

V. Safety and Supervision

1. Designate staff and counselors responsible for conflict resolution and provide them with the requisite training to build these skills.
2. Designate and train skilled counselors to have dedicated responsibility to promote inclusive, supervised play and ensure that all campers are actively engaged with others in recreational activities and positive behaviors.
3. Review all CCC programs and facilities to ensure that the campus is as safe as possible for campers, i.e., "child-proof" the grounds.

VI. CTAC / CCC Governance

Leadership to implement these changes begins at the top. Priority must be on empowering CTAC with the authority, skills, structure and people to see this program through.

1. Update CTAC's bylaws and create:
 - a. A Nominating Committee to identify new board members and to nominate the Executive Committee (the Officers of CTAC).
 - b. Introduce terms for members and Executive Committee positions.
 - c. Develop a structure for implementing organizational change and direction.
 - d. Expand the role of the Governance Committee with responsibility to revise bylaws and address other governance matters as the Board sees necessary.
 - e. Create other committees and subcommittees as needed, including defining the role of the Summer Program Committee (see VI.4. below) and a Recruitment Sub-committee (see I. above) to support the ED and the Center community as a whole.
2. Engage pro bono counsel for CTAC to serve as a continuing resource and assist with Governance issues.

3. Revitalize and diversify CTAC with new membership to build a diverse, multigenerational board. (See I. above).
4. Revitalize and reinvent the Summer Program Committee - Actively recruit members who have children at the CCC and are committed to meaningful engagement.
5. Review existing programs and explore potential for new programs based on community needs and interests (see IV.4. above).

VII. Budgeting and Funding

This is an ambitious process and implementing it will require additional resources. The Center's revenue is limited and derived largely from Community Center and tennis memberships, summer camp and tennis fees; and these fees do not cover costs. Donations including the contribution provided by the Chilmark Road Race help fill the gap. We will need to develop a budget for this program when there are better estimates of the costs of additional salary expenses for the Executive Director and for the other staff expertise envisioned in this plan, for DEI training and other staff training, for the expanded scholarship program, and for program development.

To fund this program, we will consider the following:

1. Identify partnership opportunities where possible to reduce costs.
2. Review and increase our fee structure and other revenue sources.
3. Seek pro bono advice.
4. Consider applying for grant funding.
5. Undertake a fundraising campaign to support this program.
6. Use existing CTAC reserves to begin the program.