



# The Guise Guide I

*a Good Guise Project*



# LAND & FIRST PEOPLES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we live, work and play on the traditional and current territories of the Haudensaunee, including Wendat, Seneca, and Petun, Metis and Ojibwe First Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit River.

We acknowledge that these lands & waterways are subject to the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant; an agreement between Haudenosaunee & Ojibwe allied nations to peaceably share & care for the natural resources around the Great Lakes.

We believe it is our responsibility to respect Indigenous sovereignty, nationhood and territories; as well as the traditional laws and governance standing for their protection. We commit to the ongoing (un)learning, listening, and action needed to be in right relations with Indigenous communities & the territories of Turtle Island.

We recognize that Black people were forcibly brought to Turtle Island as a 'stolen people to stolen land' throughout the last four centuries. We also recognize that many diverse people come to Turtle Island, either because of a promise of multiculturalism or the pushes and forces of globalization. We all need to stand in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples' fight against colonization and their rights to land and sovereignty.

Curatorial Statement  
Who we are/ How we are  
Building relationships can save lives.  
Background: Pandemica  
Future/Ancestors  
What is a Pod?  
Negotiating a Pod  
Moving Together  
Pillars of Transformation  
The JRNY: From Care to Accountability  
Care  
Collective Care  
Culture of Care  
How Care Shows Up  
Connect to Community  
Installation & Community Convo: Care | Eglinton Gilbert Parkette  
Installation & Community Convo: Accountability | Trinity in the Square  
Reach Out!

## HOW TO USE THIS GUISE GUIDE

We invite you to get to know us, our curatorial statement, background, vision and design story.

Get to know what we mean by PODS. Explore the Pillars of Transformation starting with the first - CARE.

Check out our installations and join an artful conversation in-person and online. Watch for [Guise Guide updates!](#)

*as part of ArtworxTO: Toronto's Year of Public Art 2021-2022*

# CURATORIAL STATEMENT



The **Good Guise** is a creative collective of racialized men (Black, brown, latinx, cis, trans, queer) who are still in the process of defining who we are; however, we all agree we want to create loving alternatives to patriarchy and patriarchal masculinity.

So, we embarked on an exploration of intimate and supportive spaces for and by racialized men.

These spaces were conceptualized and designed through **pods of care**, vulnerability, and accountability expressed and engaged through consent and creativity.





We are racialized men who want to be loved, and want to learn to love.

What is the world we want to live in? How will we define well-being, safety, and belonging?

How do we build the skills needed to create meaningful and sustainable relationships? How do we create the trust needed for other communities, especially communities we've harmed, to rely on us for mutual support?

Learning to create spaces of vulnerability and support can fundamentally reshape our ways of engaging with each other.

Violence and oppression have taken root in our bodies and weakened awareness of our interdependent bonds, growing fear, trauma, and distrust.

How can we as racialized men build meaningful, accountable relationships with each other? How can we build trusting relationships with different communities? How can we heal from our patriarchal wounds and support our communities to thrive? **Answers led to more questions:**

WHO WE ARE/  
HOW WE ARE



# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CAN SAVE LIVES.



- What relationships do we already have that we can strengthen?
- What skills do we already have to support us in this?
- What conversations can we start that increase safety and support vulnerability?
- What new structures or collaborations will we create?

## **The Good Guise proposal:**

Small, bold experiments allow us to collectively imagine what's possible for our world.

*Photo credit: Jahmal Nugent*



# BACKGROUND:PANDEMICA

In 2020, racialized communities were confronted by multiple, **simultaneous pandemics**: COVID-19, anti-Black racism, white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism. Black, Indigenous, queer, trans, disabled, migrants, sex workers, the poor and homeless were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

At the same time, marginalized communities stood up and cared for each other the way they always have. A grassroots explosion of organizing erupted, with **mutual aid** projects and **support networks** proliferating across our city, in which communities took responsibility to **care for one another**, as state-organized responses to the pandemic continued to further marginalize the already marginalized and make more vulnerable the already vulnerable.



*Photo credit: Jahmal Nugent*



# FUTURE/ ANCESTORS



WE LOOKED TO OUR PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY HISTORIES FOR INSPIRATION AND WISDOM.

The Good Guise drew inspiration from small groups or pods that highlighted intentionality, boundary setting, vulnerability, safety, consent, accountability, and support. Pods were a tool queer communities of colour used to survive and find intimacy and love during the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the 1980s (a pandemic which rages on today in different ways, and if you haven't heard about PrEp, blood bans, or the criminalization of HIV, look it up).

Women, trans and non-binary folks have been using intentional groups of trust, support, and safety as necessary responses to patriarchal violence for generations. Pods have also played a key role in transformative justice processes as a way to walk alongside those who have caused or experienced harm, promote changed behaviours, and address conditions that enabled the harm.

Honouring the wisdom of queer, trans, women and non-binary communities of colour, and the mechanisms they have utilized for accountability and support (sometimes because of the very violence we have enacted as men), the Good Guise proposed an exploration into how pods can be formed and sustained by racialized men, as a way to increase support, take responsibility and accountability, and reduce harm.

**We also wanted to explore: how are we accountable as Future Ancestors?**



PODS AS  
RADICALLY  
LOVING  
ALTERNATIVES

# WHAT IS A POD?

Another term we used for pod is "KEEPSIX," which means "got your back." These are our guys, the men we chill with and can count on when shit gets real. These are men we already have relationships with and have built trust with. These are men who have earned the right to hear our stories of vulnerability and shame, and with whom we can share skills, support, empathy, and compassion.

Rather than domination as the organizational structure, our pods are based in a partnership model, centred on interdependence and the knowing that no one is disposable.

Our pods are intentional small groups (two or more) of racialized men we already have trusting relationships with, who are willing to support each other with a specific purpose, and who are willing to be vulnerable with each other, or learn to be.



A COMMUNITY YOU CHOOSE INTO (OPEN, SAFE, FLEXIBLE, WHERE THAT MASK CAN BE REMOVED). COLLECTIVE, GUIDED, MAKE MISTAKES, AND BE SAFE. A COLLECTIVE JOURNEY - JAH GREY

# NEGOTIATING A POD



Intention



Common  
Purpose



Consent,  
including exit  
strategy

# MOVING TOGETHER

Our collective experience as racialized men working alongside racialized men has taught us that certain elements are necessary for any transformation to occur or to be sustainable. Moving from a dominator model of masculinity to a partnership one that sees interdependence and interbeing as the organic relationship of all things, requires compassion.

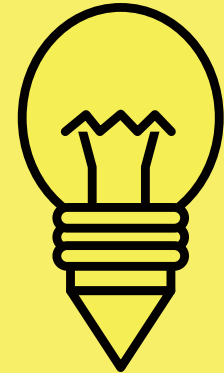
There is no denying that our happiness is inextricably bound up with the happiness of others. This is the mutual care that racialized men must attend to, if we are to live fulfilling, meaningful and liberating lives. This might sound like an unrealistic ideal right now. And maybe it is. So, let's focus on four elements that we feel are necessary - and doable to different degrees right now - to even begin doing this revolutionary work:



# PILLARS OF TRANSFORMATION



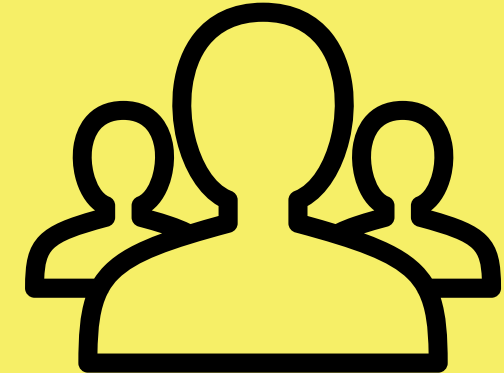
CARE



CREATIVITY



SUSTAINABILITY

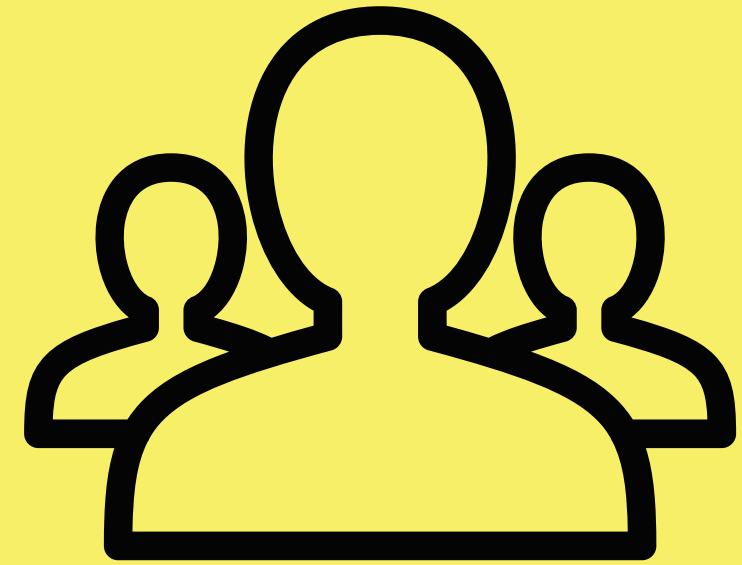
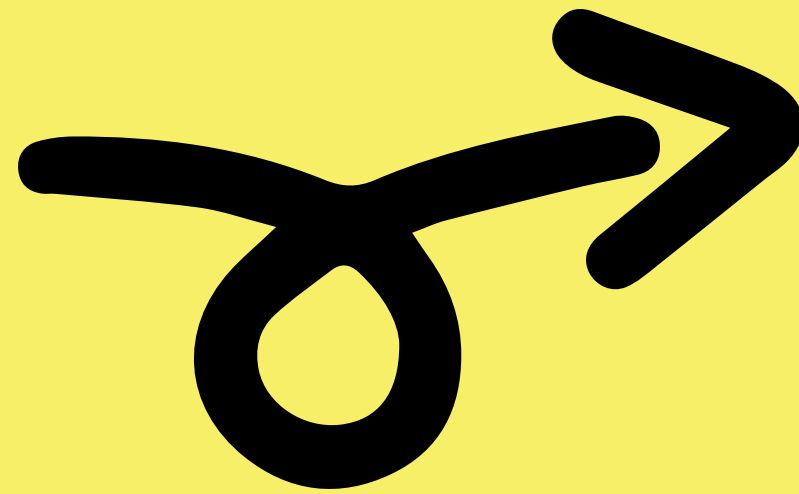


ACCOUNTABILITY

# THE JRNY: FROM CARE TO ACCOUNTABILITY



CARE



ACCOUNTABILITY

While all the pillars require attention, for the purpose of this Guide we are suggesting a path that starts rooted in **Care**, and moves towards understanding **Accountability**



# CARE

*Be **careful** with each other, so we can be dangerous together.*

This phrase originates from queer, disability and Black feminist organizing. We like it, not only because it's a great motto, but because it places an emphasis on joint responsibility for **care**. When we see each pod member's **well-being**, including our own, as a **shared responsibility**, we transform the unsustainability of the self-reliant, patriarchal model of masculinity, to a **collectively empowered partnership model**.





# COLLECTIVE CARE

As racialized men we've been subjected to violence and oppression. We experience both individual and collective trauma.

Patriarchal masculinity has promoted shame in us when we haven't been able to live up to its ideals. We've been expected to deny our needs for genuine connection and intimacy.

And...

We have also been responsible for harming others. We carry anger, anguish, stress, frustration, and shame in our bodies.

**Collective care** is necessary for our survival, health, and well-being. **Collective care** is also a collective strategy for preserving our journey together towards liberation.



# CULTURE OF CARE

Here are some prompts on creating a **culture of care**, adapted from the article “Caring About Thriving”, for pods to consider:


- How can we make space to talk about how we feel?
- What can make us feel empowered to speak up against an injustice within the group?
- What are transformative spaces? How can we create them?
- How can we work to avoid recreating the oppression that we fight?
- What are the decision making processes of the group and how can we really respect them?
- Are our organizing structures working for those who are marginalised systemically?
- Can those directly affected, take space and leadership in our groups?
- Who is usually doing care work in the group? Does everybody have a way to share care?
- How can we get past the pattern of senior or shiny personalities dominating discussions and leading collective direction?







# HOW CARE SHOWS UP



We've found that open communication between pod members is what supports **collective care**. Some pods start their regular meetings with a check-in that focuses specifically on **care** and the needs of the pod members. It's great to be as explicit about the kind of **care** that can show up in our pod, and it may vary from member to member. One person may be happy to receive that 3 am call and chat for an hour, another may only be available for a weekly walk in a park or a zoom meet.



# CONNECT TO COMMUNITY

Understanding the limits on the **care** our pod can provide can be a good basis to share trusted community resources such as food security, mental health, culturally safe healing, legal, or health and wellness services.

Here's an example of a list of community resources that you can connect to through SKETCH, or call 211 to see what's in your area!





We've said this before, and we'll say it again: we need to be careful that the responsibility of care and relational work doesn't fall on women and feminized folks – especially trans women of colour – who have almost always taken it on in addition to the gritty organizing work.

Pods of racialized men can **increase our capacity and skills**. We can take on our responsibility to engage in the necessary emotional labour to sustain our relationships, our pods, and our movements.





# INSTALLATION & COMMUNITY CONVO: CARE EGLINTON GILBERT PARKETTE



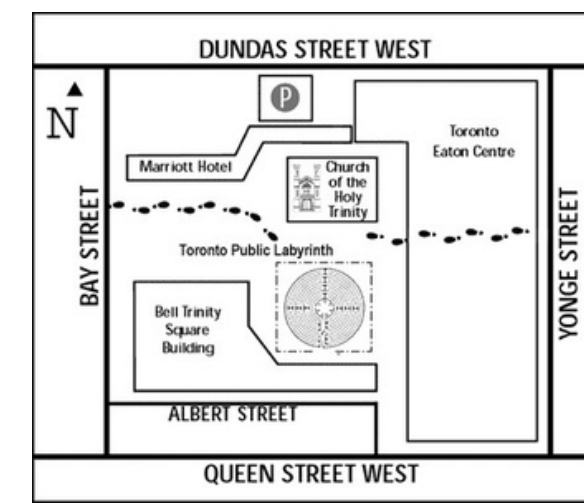
This October 2021 The Good Guise will be creating a Public Art Installation on the theme of Care and will host Conversations on **Care**, with key Community Partners, including **Across Boundaries**, local Artists, and Community Members, at Eglinton Gilbert Parkette.





# INSTALLATION & COMMUNITY CONVO: ACCOUNTABILITY TRINITY IN THE SQUARE

In November we will conclude the JRNY with an installation at Trinity in the Square, rooted in Accountability and considering how we are Accountable both presently and as Future Ancestors. Community Conversations with **Rittenhouse**, Toronto Based Artists and Community Members.







# GRATITUDE:

## THE HARD EARNED LESSONS DEVELOPED WITH WISDOM AND SHARED WITH SUCH GENEROSITY MADE THIS GUIDE POSSIBLE

We would like to acknowledge all the queer and trans women of colour in our lives, including the women of colour on our advisory team, all those we met with at our sessions to build our understanding, and the rich history of wisdom of Black, Indigenous, queer, disability and sex worker justice movements.

### Recommended Glossaries:

1. The Anti-Violence Project
2. Racial Equity Tools
3. The 519 Glossary of Terms

### Other sources:

Angelou, M. (2020), Still I Rise // Creative Interventions Toolkit (2012) // Heilman et al., The Man Box (2017) // Herzing, R. (2021), Transforming Punishment: What is Accountability Without Punishment, in Mariame Kaba We Do This 'Til We Free Us. // hooks, bell (2004), The Will to Change—Men, Masculinity, and Love // Mehreen, R., & Brunet, P. Caring About Thriving, Politics & Care (2017) // Mingus, M. & the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective (2016), Pods and Pods Mapping Worksheet // Schulman, S. (2017), Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair // Sharp, M. (2021), Future Ancestors Teaching Social Justice, Anti-Racism to all // Smith, J., & Winters, W. (2020), How to Form a Pandemic Pod // Thom, K. C. (2019), I Hope We Choose Love



sketch

REACH OUT!

INFO@GOODGUISE.CA

INTERACT WITH THE ENTIRE GUISE GUIDE TO  
LEARN MORE ABOUT RADICAL PODS OF CARE  
[sketch.ca/publicart/mplr](https://sketch.ca/publicart/mplr)

We continue to experiment with small, bold steps rooted in care, creativity, accountability, and love. As future ancestors, we strive to transform patriarchy into partnership, domination to collective action. We are racialized men, responsible to our ancestors, and who are future ancestors. And we choose radically loving alternatives. Who will we invite to join our pod?

Guise Guide I 2021

Text: Javier Davila; Design: Julian Diego

Cover Photo: Jah Grey Photos: Jahmal Nugent, Julian Diego

Thank you to all who have created, reasoned or met with us over the years to help build this understanding!

