



KINSHIP DOJO

A Report on the 2024 Pilot EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By Hannah Atkinson Renglich, February 2025

Executive Summary

We are excited to extend a special invitation to you to join us for an immersive and embodied cohort experience to co-design a TNC space that brings our [Relationships, Belonging, and Anti-Oppression Charter](#) to life. We are calling this experiment the TNC “Kinship Dojo.” - from our initial TNC Kinship Dojo invite to TNC members

What is the TNC Kinship Dojo?

While TNC has a longstanding and deeply held practice of anti-oppression (as evidenced by its many [resources](#), [affinity groups](#), and generous [programming](#)), in 2024, the leadership decided it was time to experiment with new and different ways of engaging the TNC community in the work. This project is rooted in a passion for collective liberation, guided by the principles of disability justice to practice a different way of building community and belonging. The stated purpose of the Kinship Dojo, as an experimental space for anti-oppression practice, was that it would be for:

- imagining new ways of doing equity work together
- practicing embodying what we’ve been learning and unlearning
- building our muscles in community
- making use of what we have (resisting the desire for someone/something else to change)
- focusing attention on systems

Toronto Neighborhood Centres (TNC) piloted the “Kinship Dojo,” a creative new experiment in embodied equity, over the course of six months. With a cohort of 20 to 30 practitioners, a diverse group of guides and facilitators hosted six monthly sessions that included a catered lunch, followed by four hours of learning, reflection, and practice. This report attempts to capture a snapshot of the uniqueness of the pilot, shedding light on the context, approach, principles and values, content, essential elements, and participant voices.

The TNC Kinship Dojo was not simply a program or workshop; it was a living relational container, co-held by TNC and its community of co-learners. A dojo in this context is a place of practice—not just for technical skill but for cultivating a way of being, one attuned to kinship, accountability, and mutual becoming. It is a space for slowing down, unlearning, and composting extractive tendencies so that more generative, grounded ways of being together can emerge.

The term "kinship" here is expansive—it includes more-than-human relations, ancestral threads, institutional inheritances, and deep attention to the ways we are entangled. The Dojo was part of an evolving landscape where participants engage in reflexive, relational, and sometimes uncomfortable practices that bring collective patterns into awareness and make space for transformation.

What Did We Intend to Explore Through This Work?

The intention behind the Kinship Dojo was to co-create a space where participants could:

- Practice holding complexity, paradox, and tension
- Learn to listen beyond words—to silences, to bodies, to the more-than-human
- Engage in accountability without defaulting to shame or blame
- Explore how inherited institutional, cultural, and personal patterns influence how we relate
- Build capacity to be in difficult conversations and transformative conflict
- Remember and reweave a sense of place, ancestry, and purpose

Rather than delivering predefined outcomes, the Dojo functioned as a co-learning vessel—a terrain for mutual learning, where knowledge emerges from the field of relation.

Why Does This Matter for Community-Building?

Our inherited models of community-building are often deeply shaped by modernity's logic—transactional, individualistic, and efficiency-driven. In this context, aspects of our work can become extractive, performative, or unsustainable. The Kinship Dojo explored an alternative: a practice ground for re-patterning ourselves in ways that can sustain truly relational, reciprocal communities.

The Dojo supported participants to:

- Deepen their capacity to stay in discomfort rather than resolve it prematurely
- Move from relational fragility to relational integrity
- Recognize and disrupt internalized colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal habits of relating
- Reclaim joy, reverence, and imagination as part of community work

This matters because community-building that does not engage at the level of pattern, perception, and being is often shallow and unsustainable. The Dojo offered opportunities to weave depth back into our day-to-day efforts as we work together in community.

What Outcomes Did We Achieve Through This Pilot?

Outcomes were intentionally not framed as checklists or deliverables. However, several relational and developmental shifts were noted:

- Increased awareness among participants of how their positionalities shape relational dynamics
- Heightened ability to hold conflict and tension with curiosity rather than defensiveness
- Emergence of new language and shared metaphors for relational complexity
- A sense of belonging to a living inquiry, rather than to a fixed identity group
- Deeper commitments to ongoing relational practice, including outside the formal Dojo space

Participants expressed that they experienced the space as sacred, courageous, and unlike typical professional development spaces. The facilitators noted a collective movement toward deeper accountability, a softening of rigid identities, and a shared capacity for co-holding the field.

What Are Some Key Questions That Have Emerged?

Rather than offering closure, the Dojo has opened new lines of inquiry. Some questions that emerged include:

- How do we continue practicing kinship beyond facilitated containers?
- How can we introduce Dojo practices in more of our day-to-day work?
- What are we unwilling to let go of, and why?
- How do we hold difference without demanding resolution?
- What patterns do we reproduce even as we seek to undo them?
- What does collective accountability look like when no one is in charge?

These questions are guiding the next stages of Dojo work, inviting a community of practice, further iteration, deepening, and transformation.

The TNC Kinship Dojo was made possible by two of TNC's longstanding funders, the Maytree Foundation, and the Atkinson Foundation, and was co-created with an incredible group of people who cared for the Kinship Dojo experience: Parnika Celly - guide & facilitator; Stevie Hill - guide & facilitator; Chris Leonard - guide & facilitator; Maddie Marmor – facilitator; Fran Odette - guide & facilitator; Hannah Atkinson Renglich - lead consultant & facilitator.

Collectively, this group co-defined the parameters of the Kinship Dojo alongside TNC's co-executive directors, Sree Nallamothu and Rob Howarth and guided by TNC's Intersectionality Affinity Group, many of whom also became practitioners in the Kinship Dojo.



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