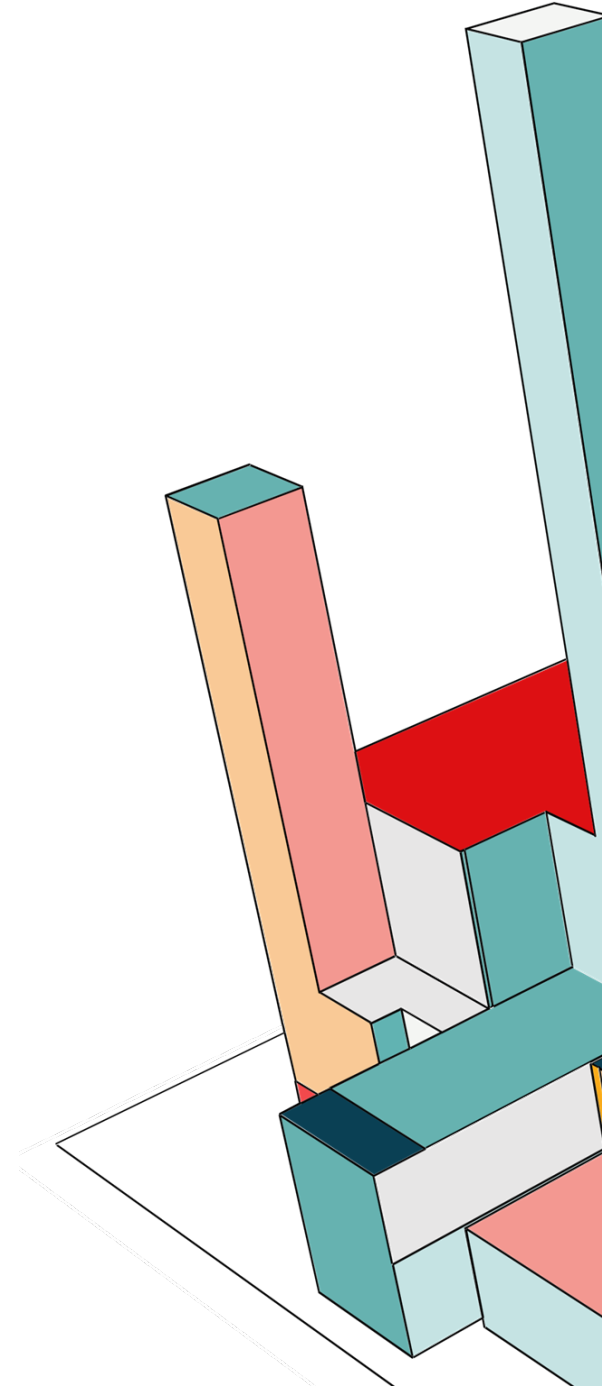




# **KEEPING EDI ACTIVE IN TODAY'S CLIMATE**

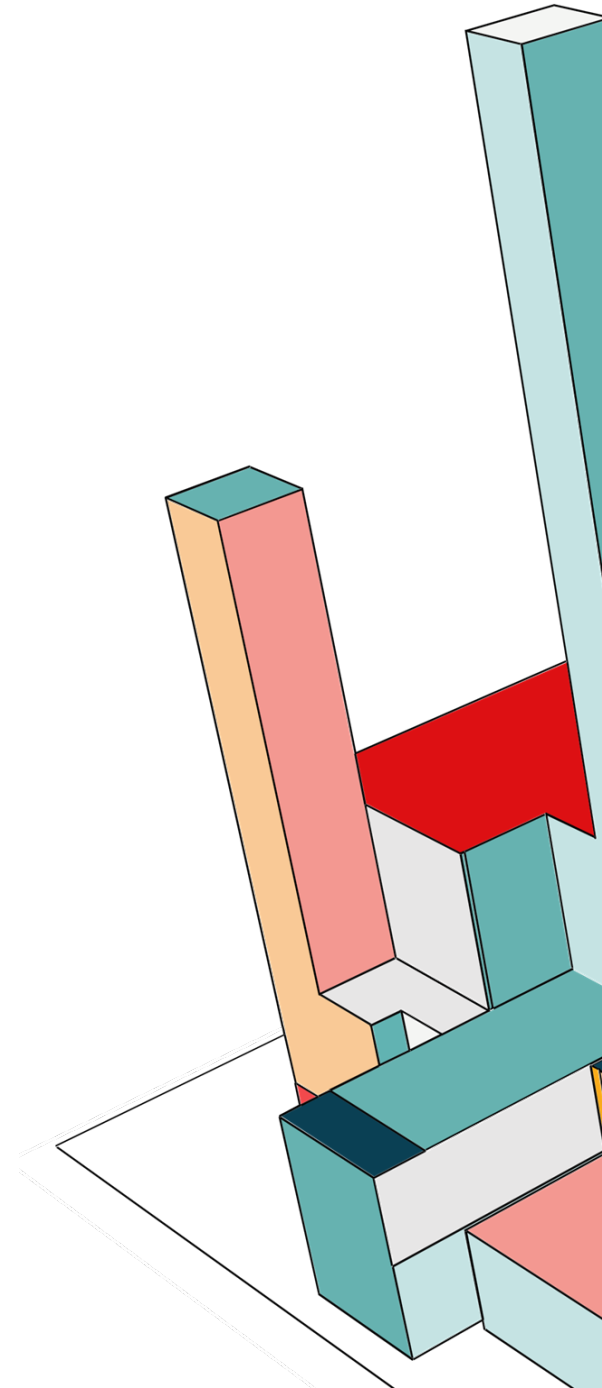
# Land Acknowledgement



At The Participation House Project, Durham Region where I am visiting from we share the following land/territorial acknowledgement

We recognize the lands on which we gather are covered under the Williams Treaties and rest within the traditional territory of the Mississaugas, a branch of the Anishinaabeg Nation, which also includes Algonquin, Chippewa, Odawa, Ojibway and Pottawatomi. It is through the treaty process that we are able to live, learn, teach and prosper in this region.

We acknowledge with gratitude this land and the Indigenous Peoples who have cared for and continue to protect Turtle Island (North America) and its resources. We commit to the responsibility of reconciliation and the work of increasing awareness and understanding of our shared history. We do so by recognizing the past and working towards a shared future as friends and allies.



# The Panelists

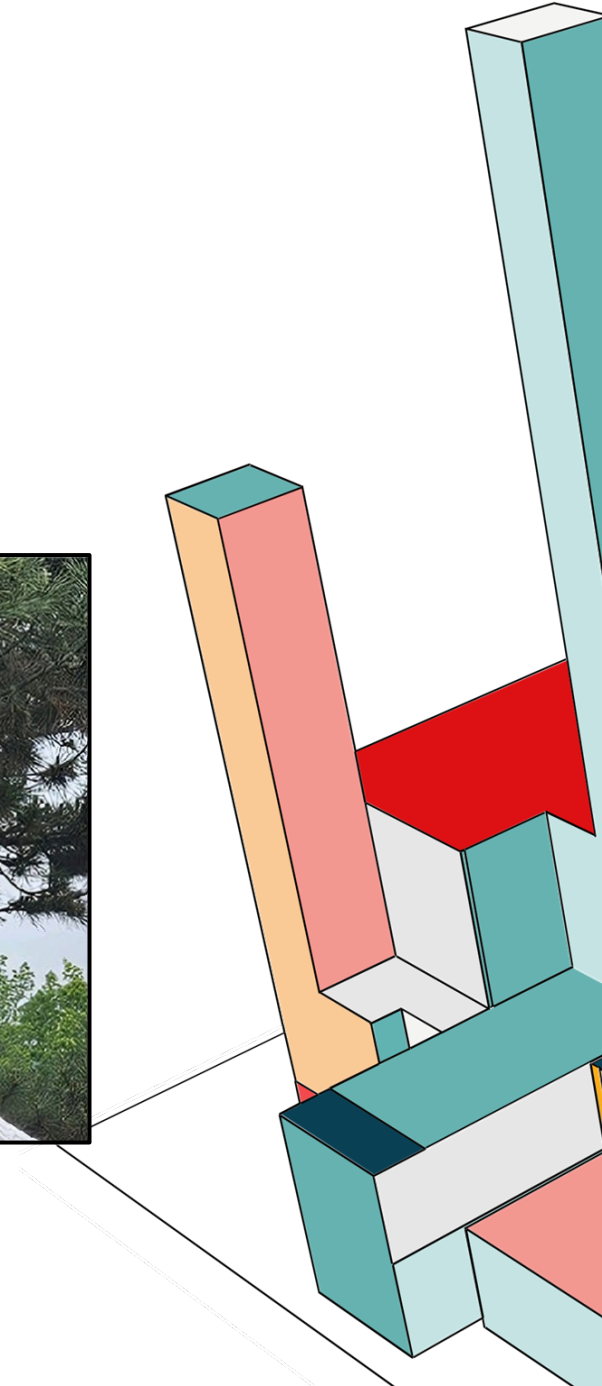
Ron Trajano

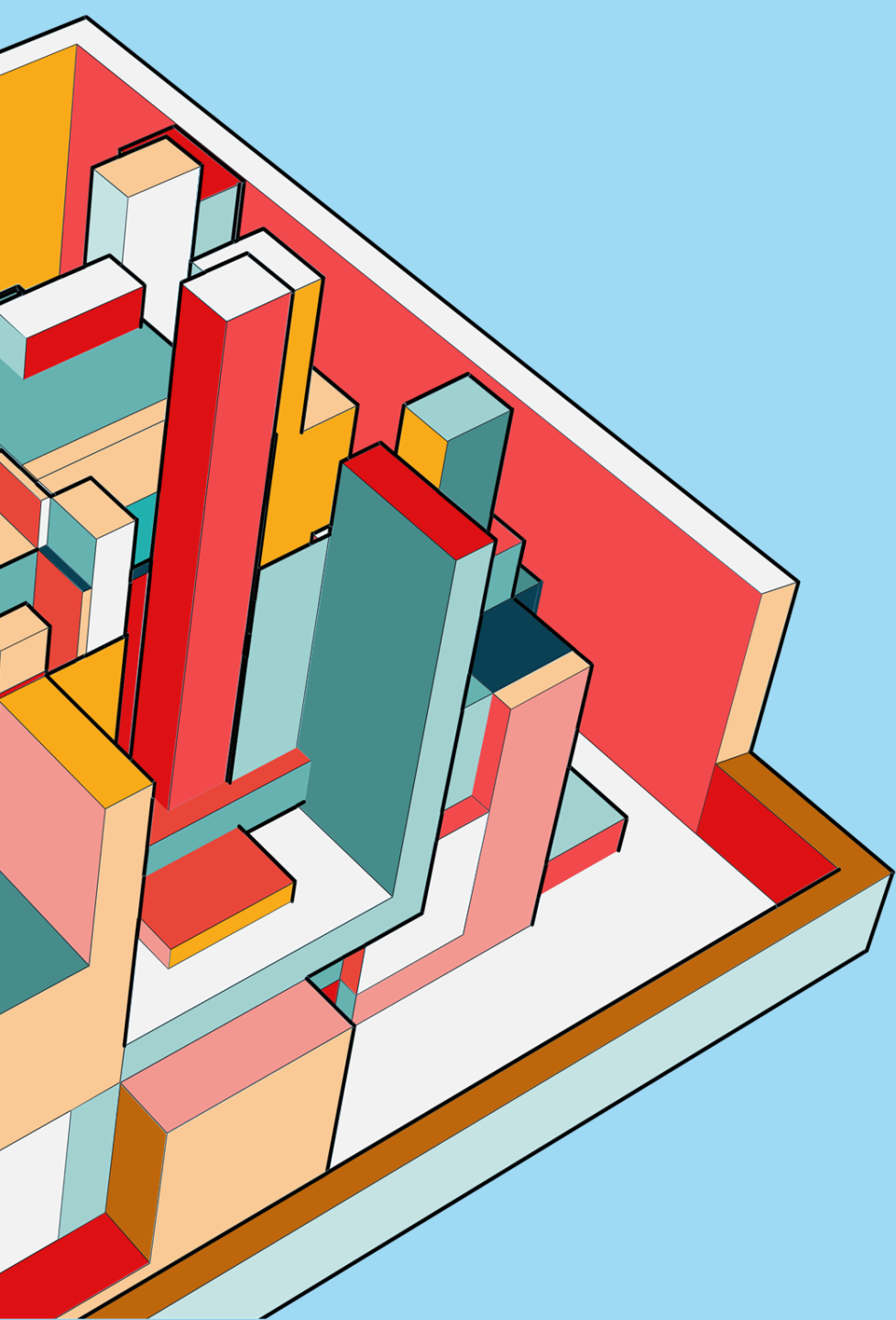


Sharri-Ann Edmunds



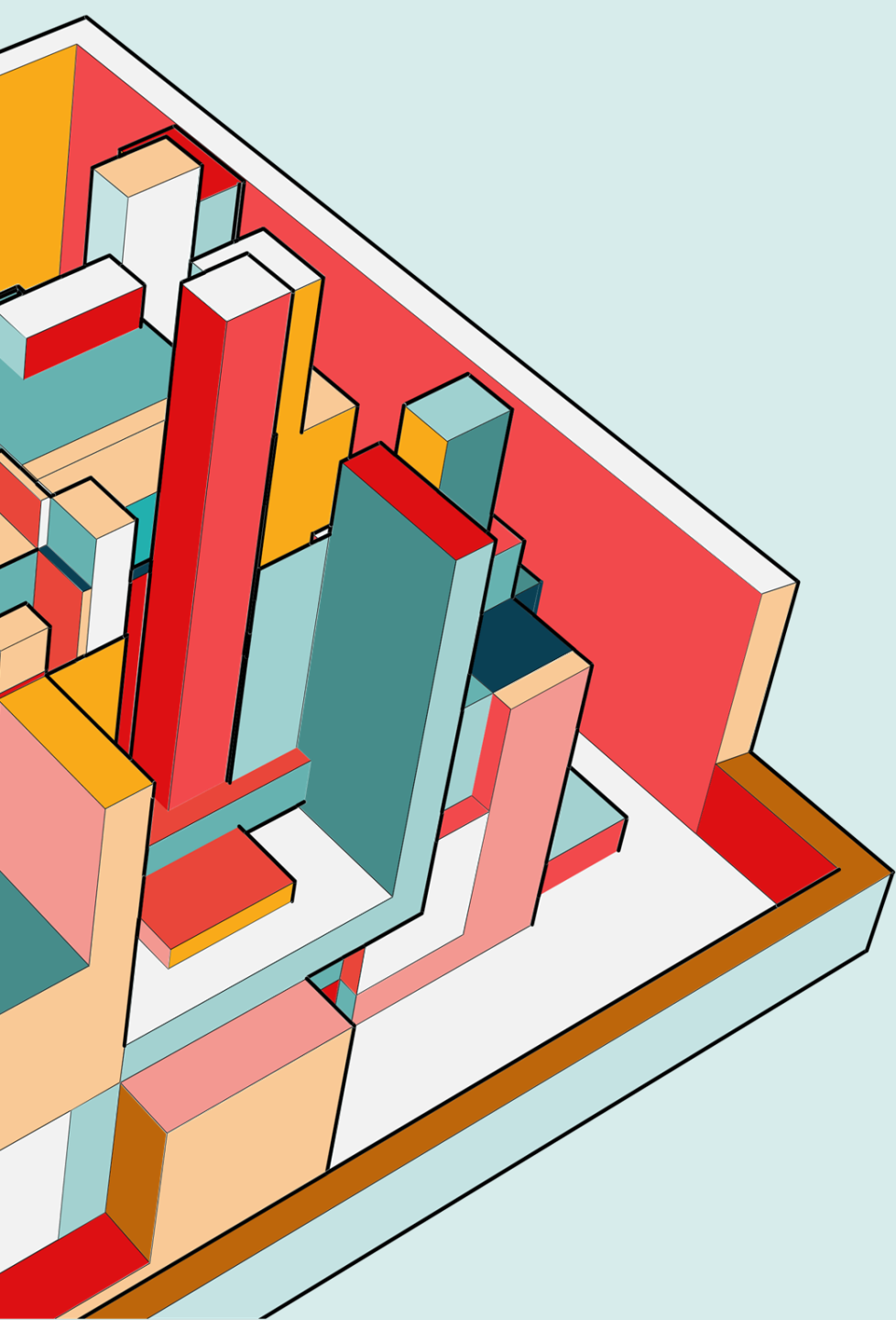
Sheldon Samlall





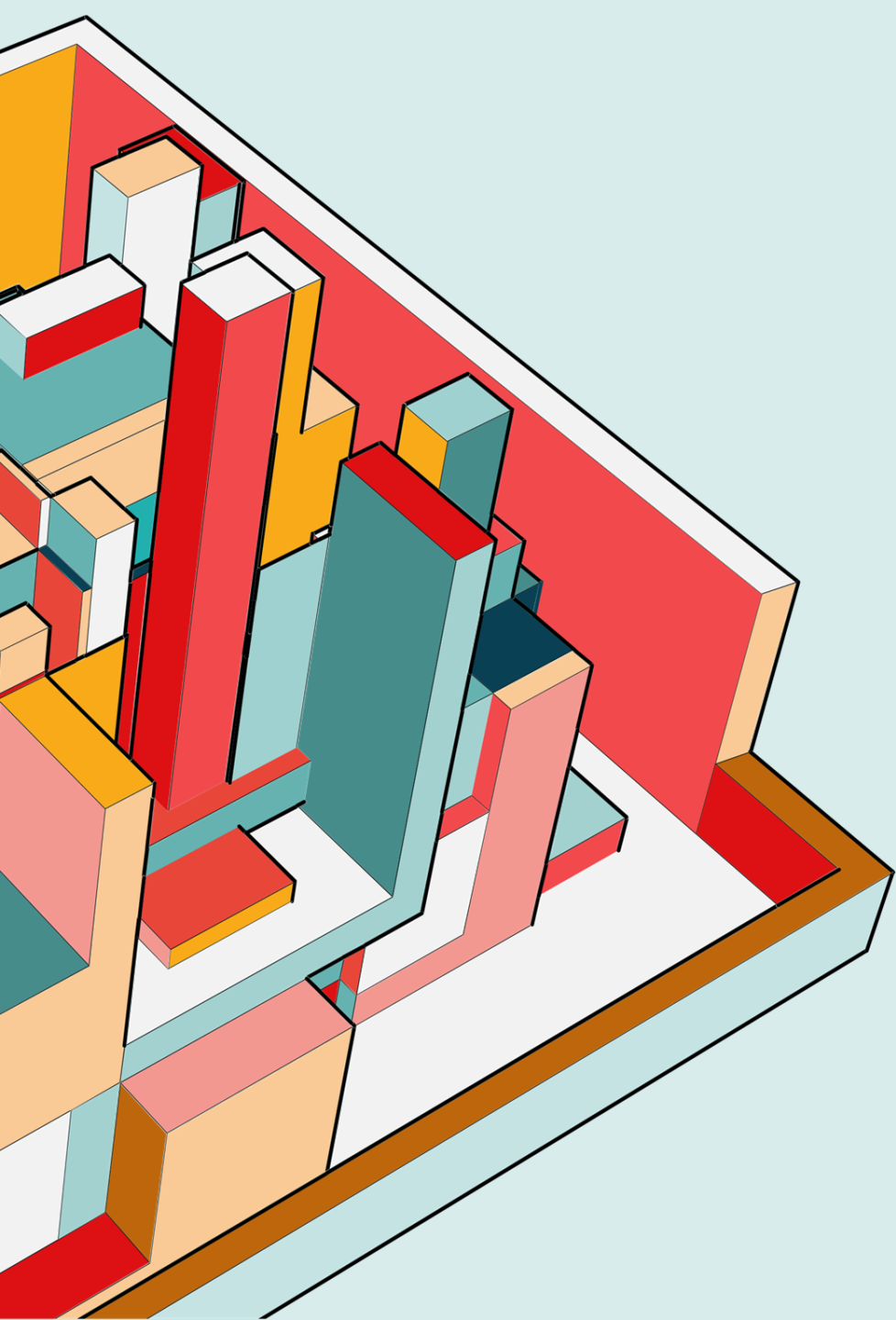
# 1. MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

What is the role and/or responsibility of an agency or organization when it comes to the mental health and wellbeing of its staff?



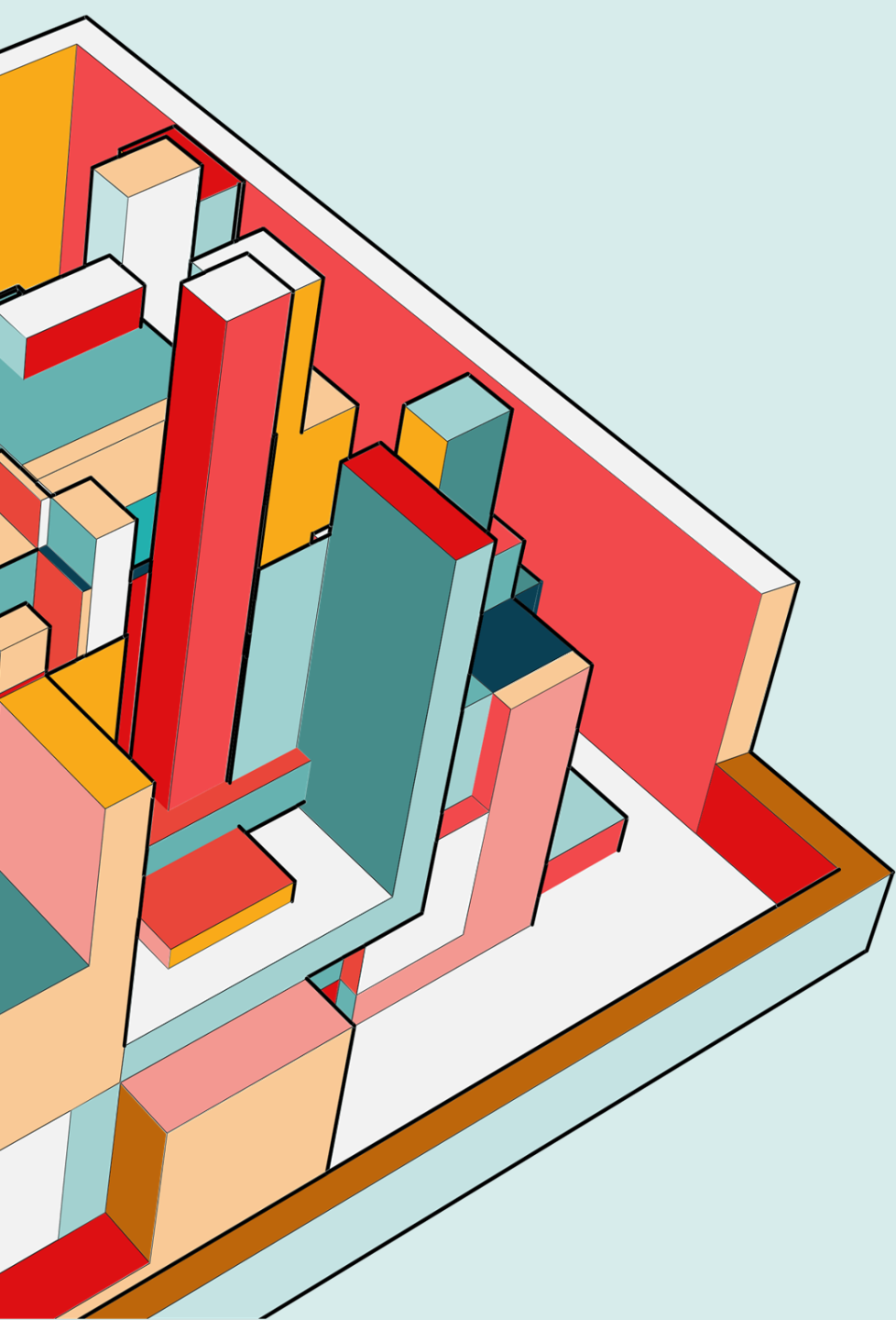
# Work-Life Balance

- Encourage boundaries and breaks
- Normalize taking vacation and personal time
- Leadership must *model* balance



# Tangible Supports — Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

- Offer confidential counseling and crisis support
- Include short-term therapy, 24/7 helplines, financial/legal advice
- Make access and awareness easy for all staff



# Flexibility Builds Psychological Safety

- Honour bereavement, cultural, and religious observances
- Allow mental health days and family flexibility
- Recognize diverse needs and experiences

# Approach

- **Basics first:** Clear policies & procedures, CBA's, training at all levels.
- **Collaborate:** Partner with regional counterparts for cost-effective training.
- **Leverage resources:** Apply for funding, use free sector tools (e.g., RealXChange).
- **Feedback loop:** Embed mental health questions in staff surveys.
- **Culture of respect:** Most cost-effective strategy—respect and accountability.



# INCLUSIVE WORKSPACE

- Create space for employees to bring their “whole selves” to work.
- Accommodate mental health and neurodivergence (e.g., flexible schedules, extended orientation).
- Affordable benefits: Negotiated paramedical coverage (mental health, physio, chiro, massage).



## **2. SUSTAINING EDI LEARNING**

How can organizations in the developmental sector move beyond foundational EDI training to create leadership programs that empower leaders to embed these principles into decision-making, culture, and strategy?





# Strategic Integration and Leveraging Existing Frameworks at EAFWR

EDIB is a core priority in the 2024–2027 Strategic Plan

- Working groups with embedded EDIB goals
- Equity Strategist guiding implementation
- Alignment across departments and initiatives
- Using HR and wellness structures to support EDIB
- Embedding equity into performance reviews, onboarding, and staff development



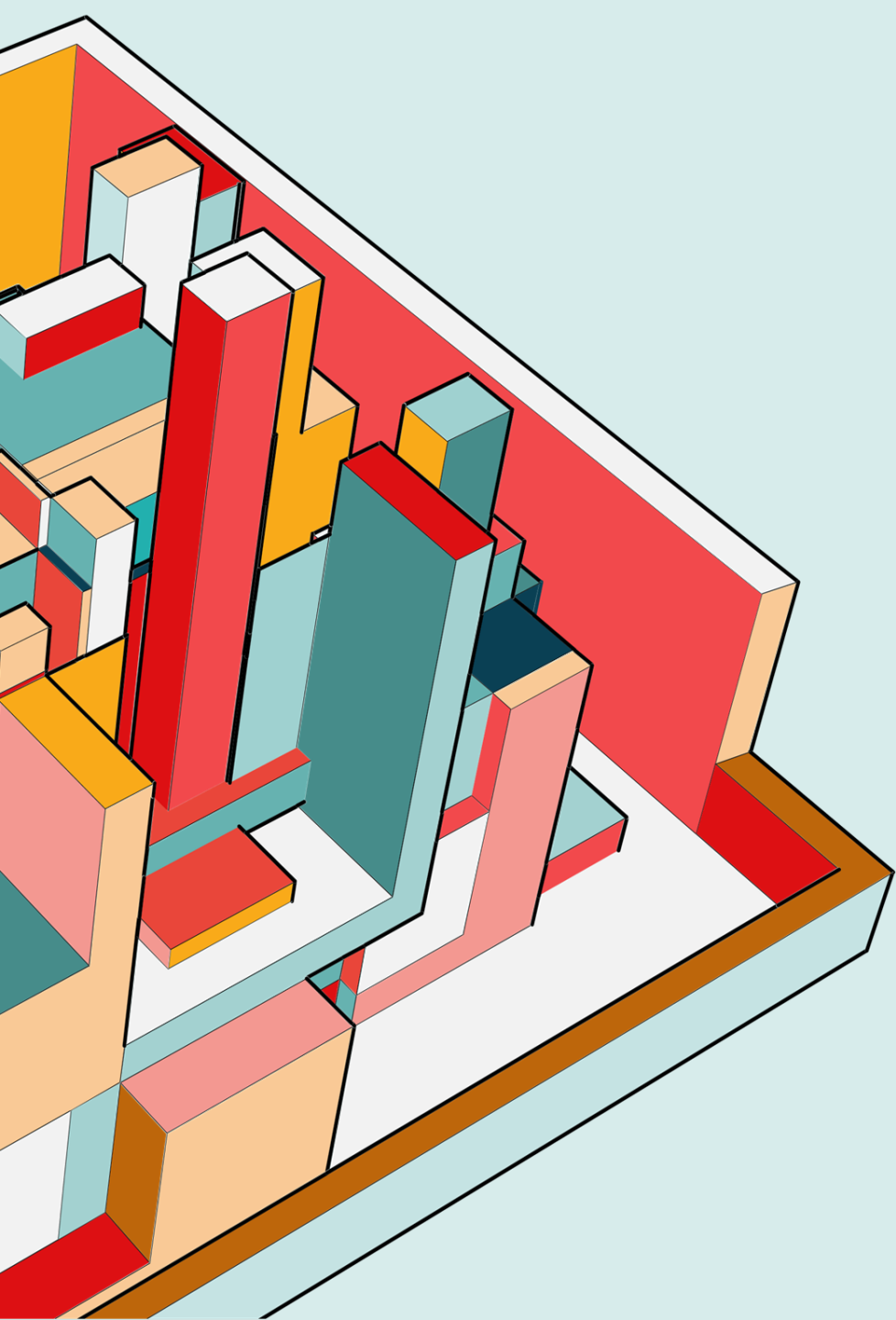
## Practical Implementation at EAFWR

- Days of Significance calendar
- Holiday Substitution policies
- Culturally inclusive wellness activities
- Truth & Reconciliation Commitment Statement
- Evolving Territorial Acknowledgments
  - Co-creating acknowledgments with Indigenous partners
  - Co-use of space for drum circles and cultural events
  - Incorporating Indigenous practices
  - Accessible resources for self-directed learning

## 2. SUSTAINING EDI LEARNING

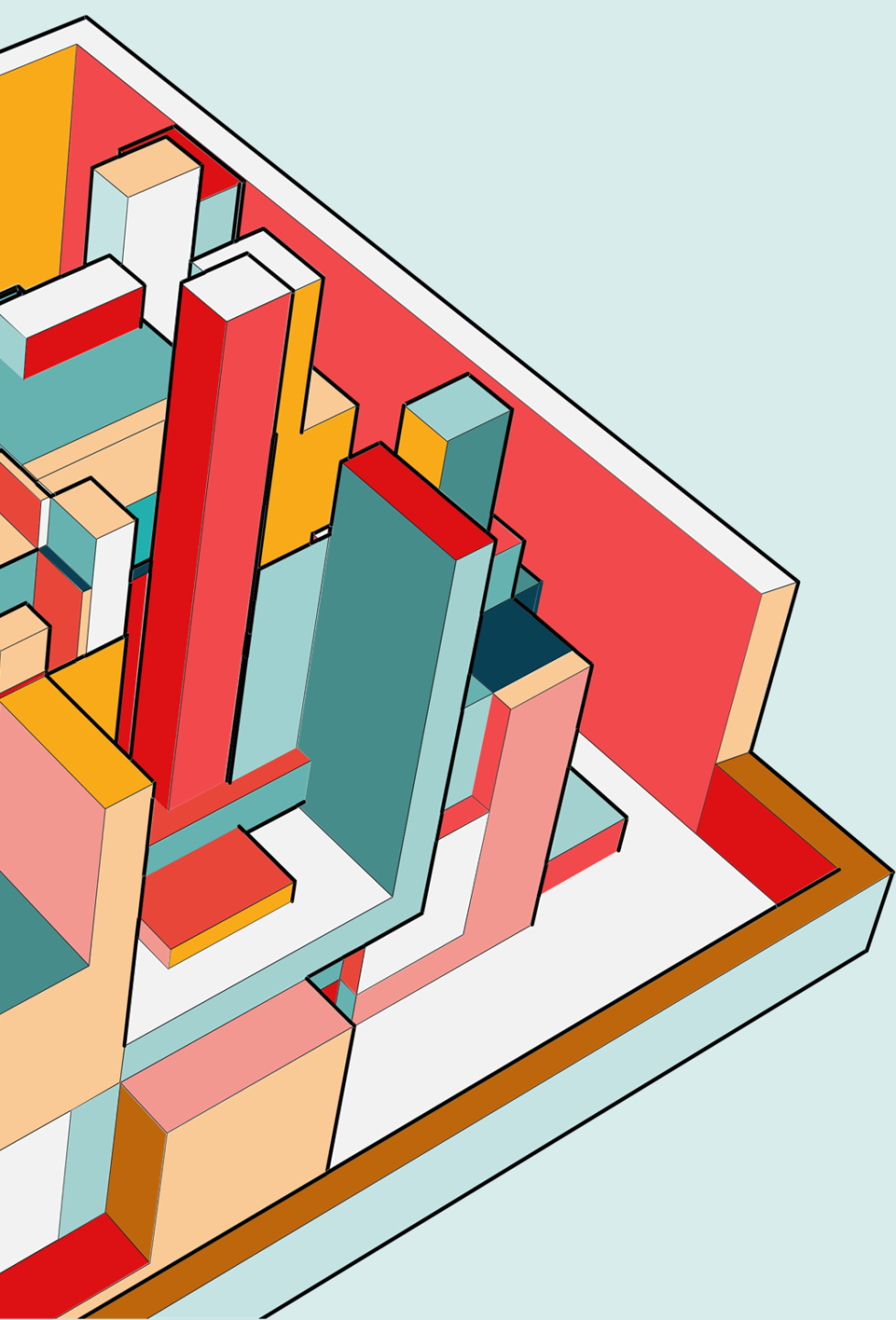
- Leaders maintain focus even during financial challenges:
  - Allocate resources despite budget constraints.
  - Embed EDI roles into existing staff responsibilities.
- Accessibility example:
  - Challenged discriminatory city by-law limiting housing for people with disabilities.
  - Financial Resources are required





# Integrate EDI into Strategic Plans

- Embed EDI goals directly into the organization's strategic plan
- Align with hiring, client services, and leadership priorities
- Set measurable outcomes and accountability



# Keep EDI Top of Mind

- Bring EDI into team meetings and supervision check-ins
- Use real workplace scenarios for discussion
- Reflect on language, accessibility, and inclusion regularly

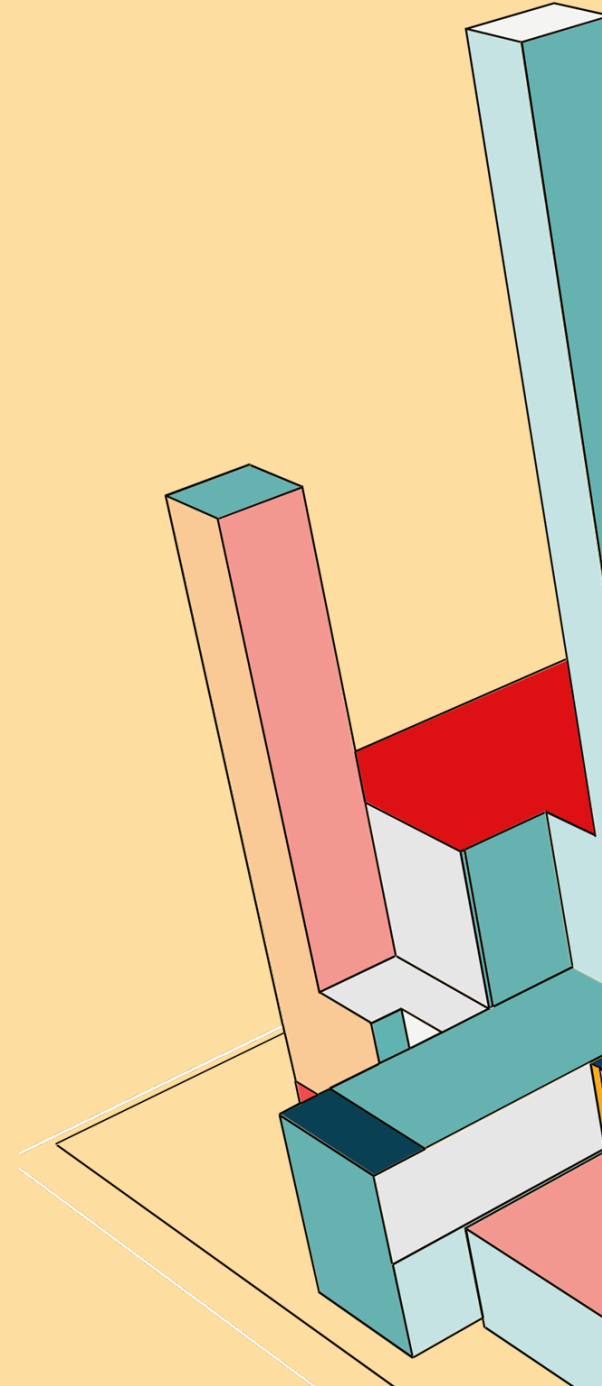
### **3. LEADERSHIP & EDI**

What impact does intentional leadership support have on the success of embedding of EDI in an organization?



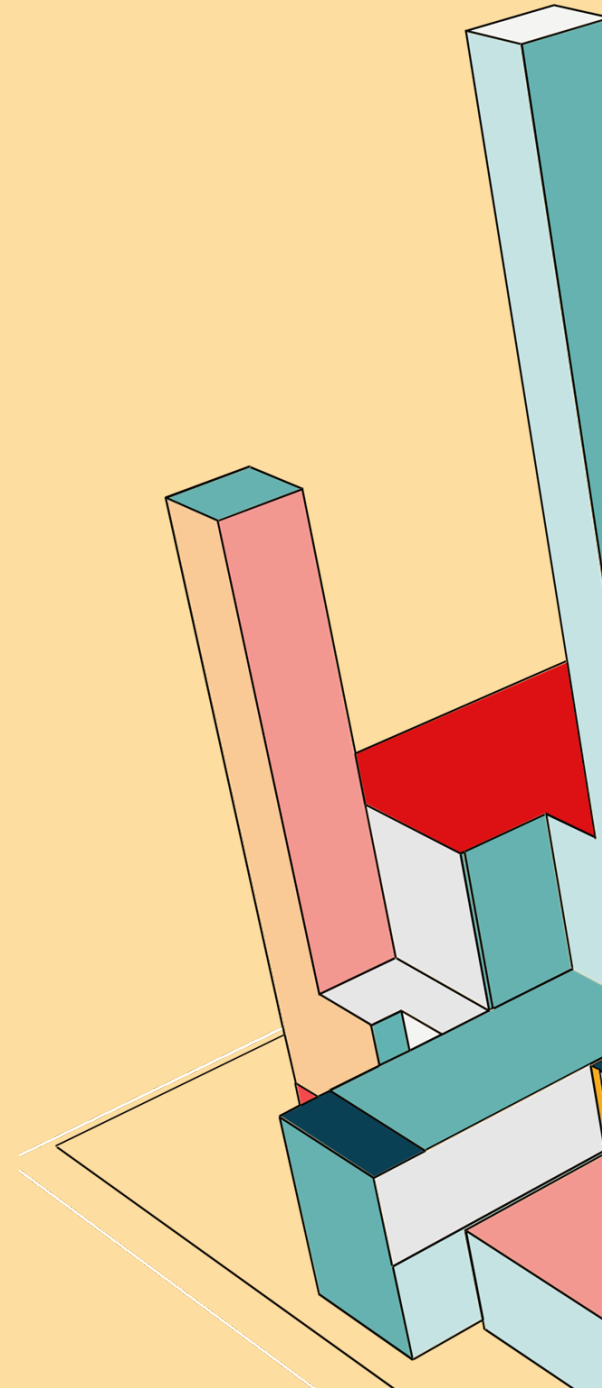
### 3. LEADERSHIP & EDI: Story

*My story is living at Oshawa, ON. My name is Deanna. I'm falling in love with this place... I signed this paper with Leslie Younger [the manager] at, Bowmanville, Ontario. I am feeling independent in this home with a home office, that my skills are important, like with a powerful improvement engine within my own part in life. Deanna is a good fit with the Bloor's staff.*



### 3. LEADERSHIP & EDI IS...

- Intentionally building opportunities for Equity
- Intentionally planning for diversity
- Intentionally making sure your plans, budgets and actions are inclusive



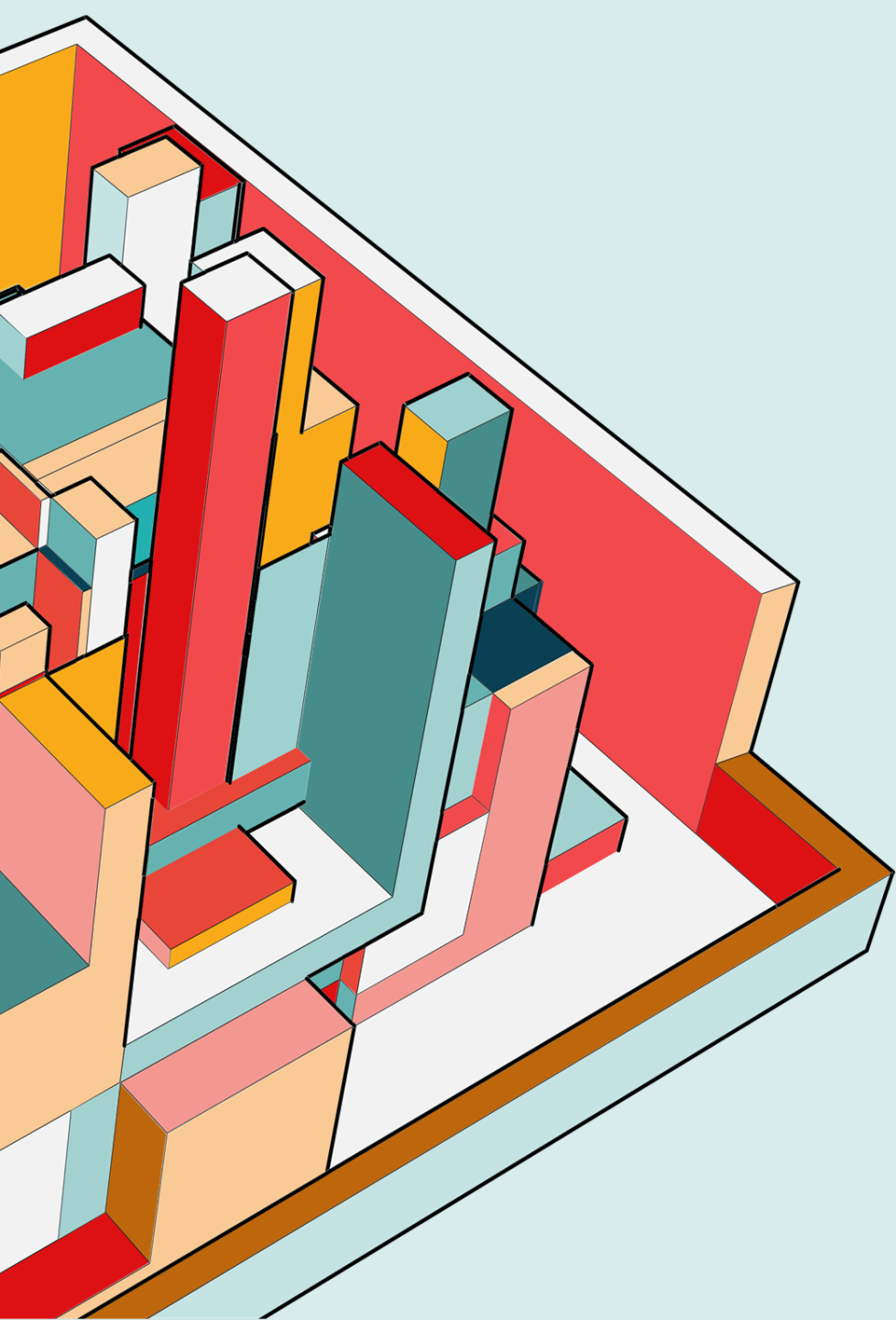


# EDI in policies and leadership

**Our staff complement is diverse, and as such we have a dedicated role in the organization that advises senior leadership in the areas of EDIB.**

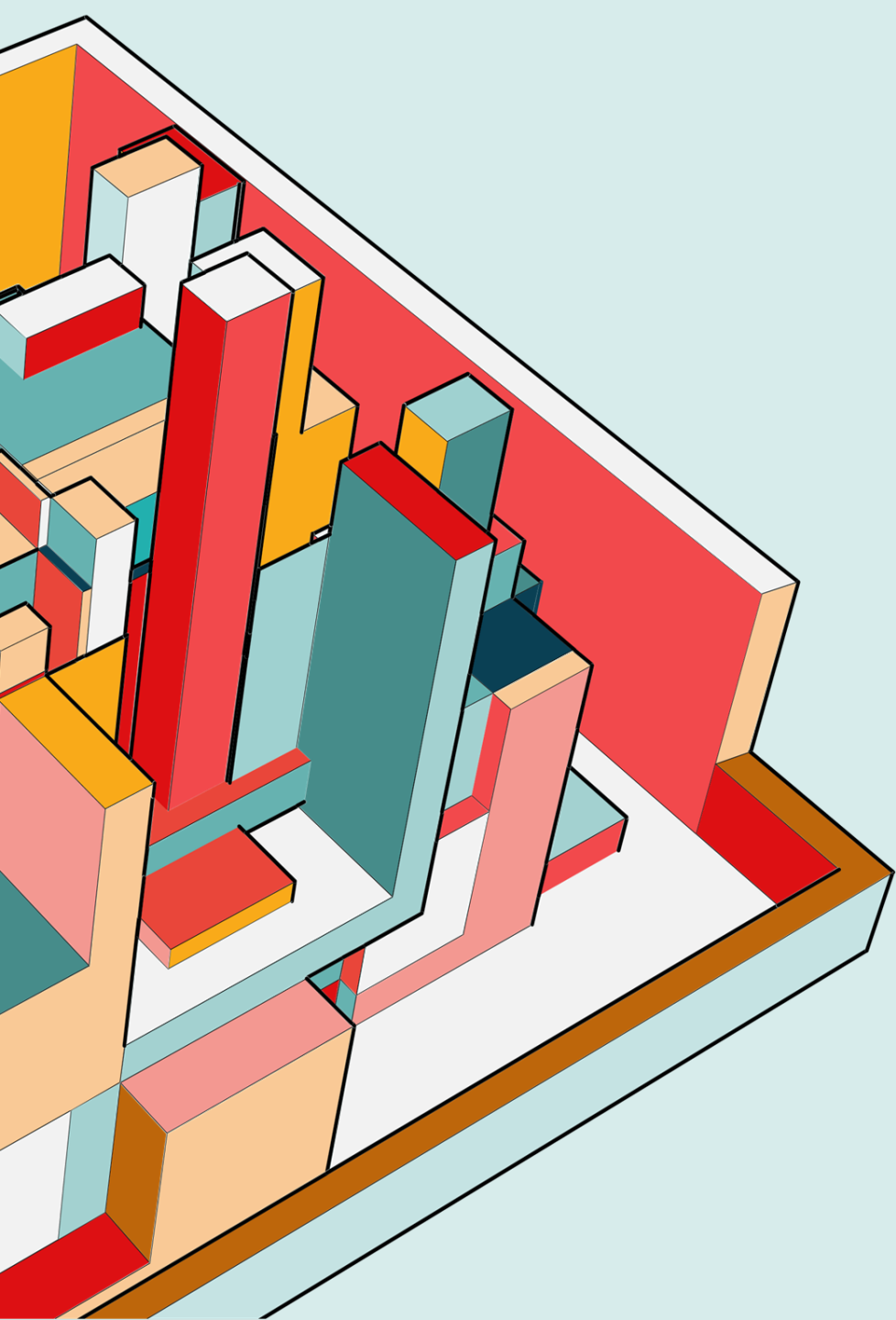
**The equity strategist works with the agency's management team to ensure policies, procedures, service delivery, recruitment are all implemented with the principles of EDIB. The equity strategist also works with our Training and Organizational Development team to provide training that relates to EDIB topics.**

Other initiatives we have implemented include the Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP). We want to support staff who have leadership aspirations, As such, candidates in the program are provided with formal leadership training for one year (through the University of Waterloo), plus a leadership mentor to help guide them. After the candidate has completed their formal leadership training, they are assigned to lead a project so that they can put their learnings to use. The goal of this program is to develop and strengthen the skills of the candidates so that they are qualified for any leadership position whether the opportunity is within the agency. or in an external organization.



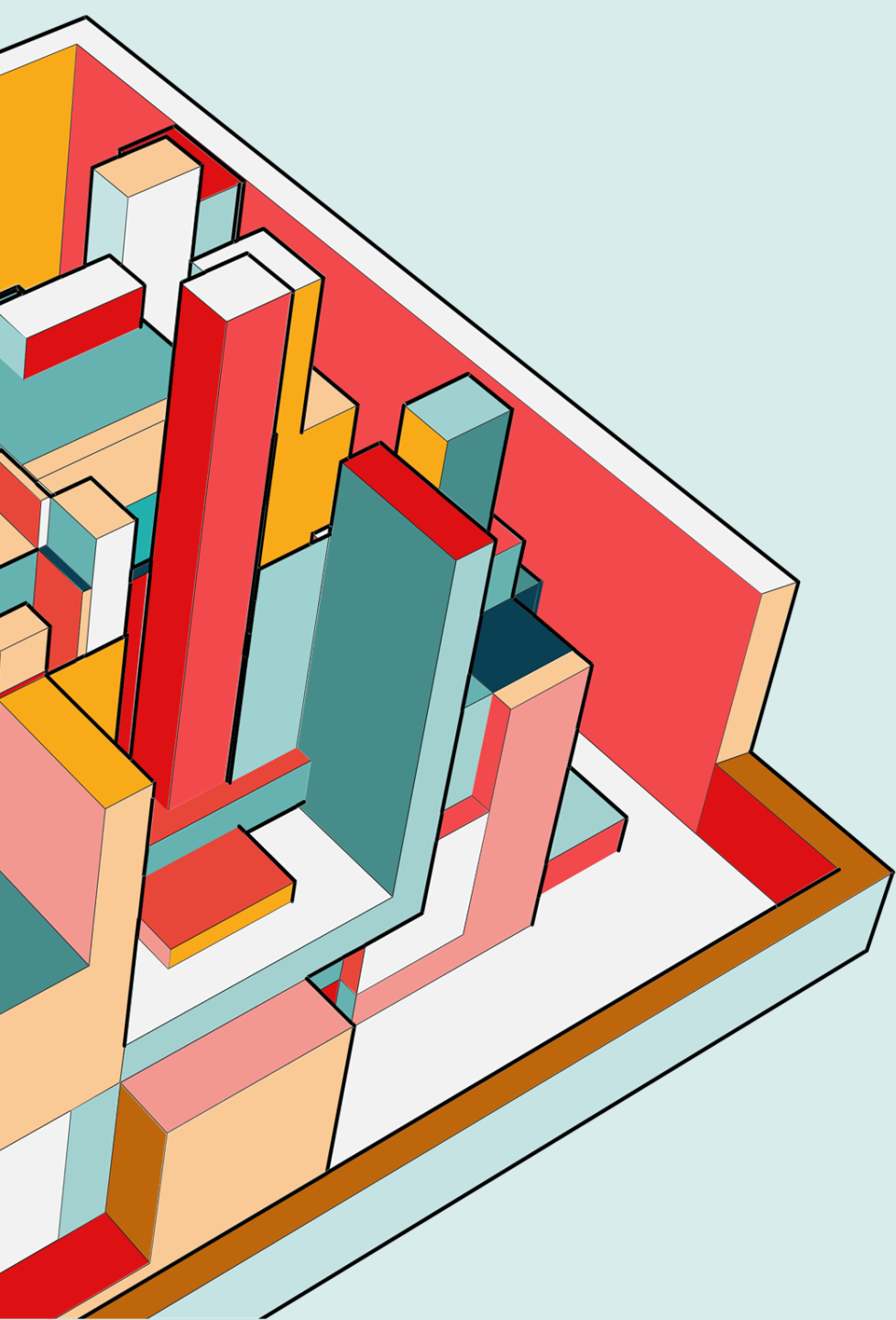
# Lead by Example

- Leaders set the tone — culture follows conduct
- Model inclusive behaviors: listening, humility, accountability
- Create psychological safety for open dialogue



# From Policy to Practice

- Develop strong, values-driven EDI policies
- Translate them into daily practice and decision-making
- Regularly review policies to ensure alignment with lived experiences



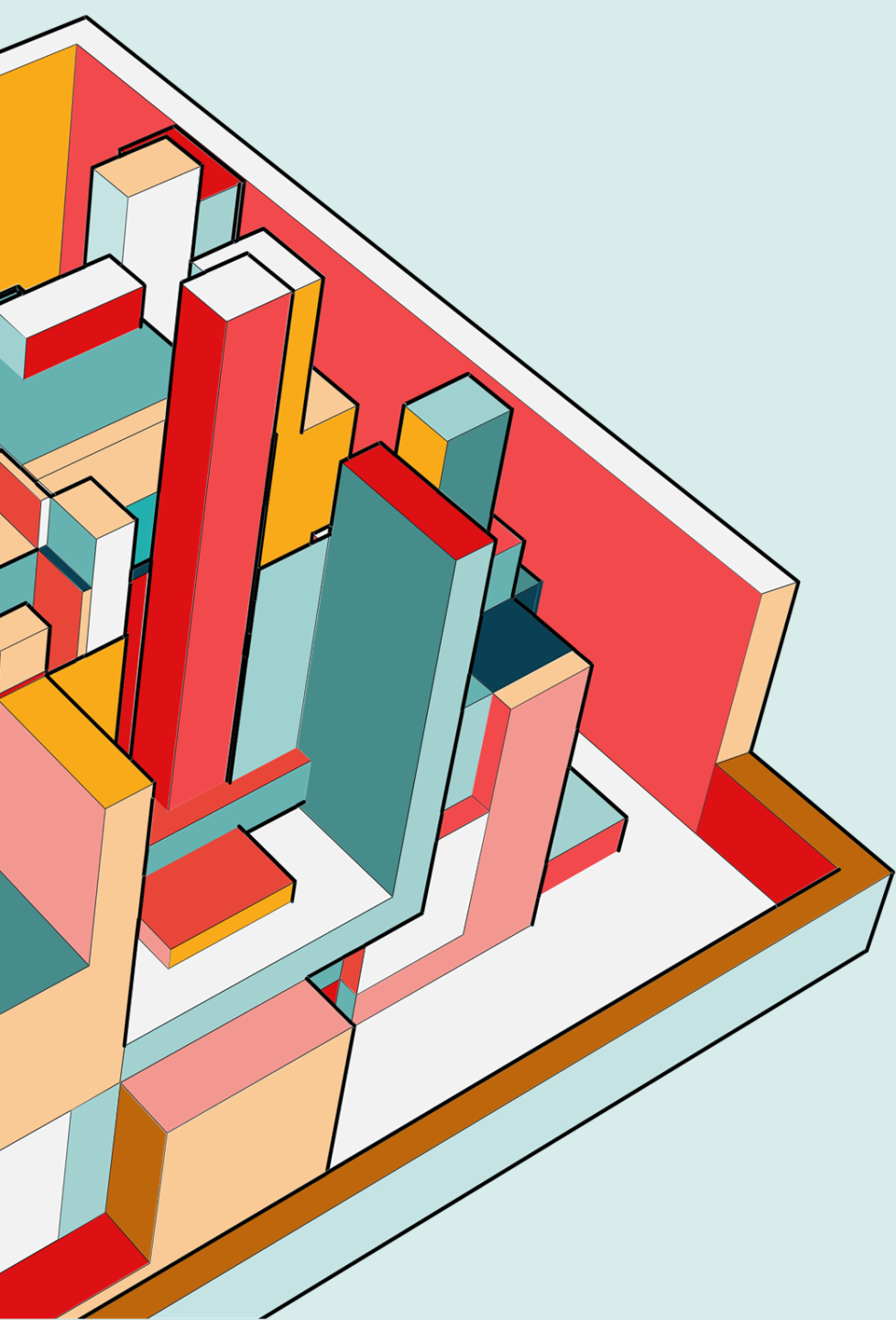
# The Full Circle of Leadership

- Lead by example
- Build for sustainability
- Turn policy into everyday practice

# 4. MONEY TALKS

How can we continue to invest in EDI initiatives in the current climate of funding cuts, inflation, tariffs, etc.?

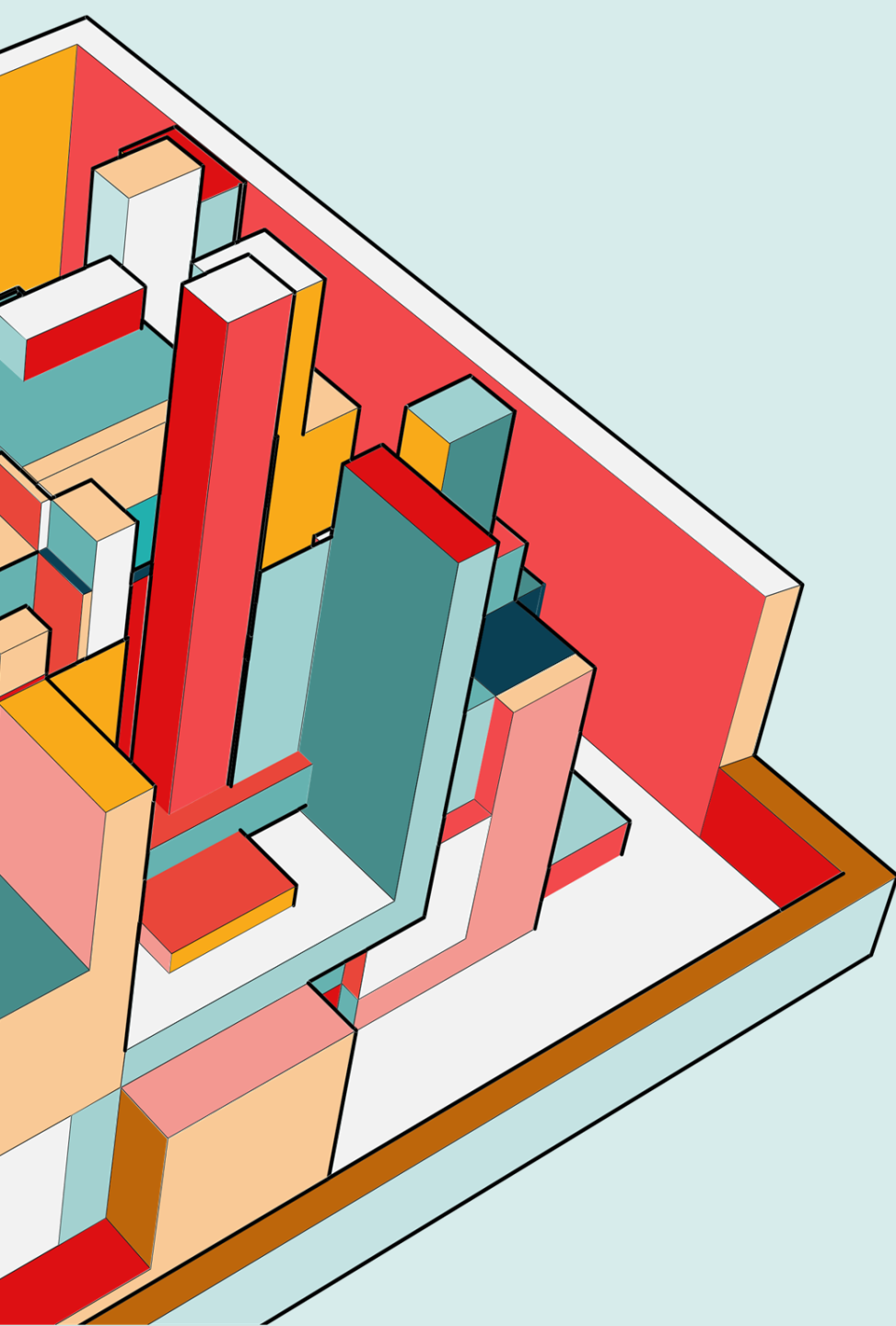




# Investing in EDI in Challenging Times

Even with today's realities — funding cuts, inflation, and tighter budgets — EDI cannot fall off the table. In fact, in times like these, it becomes even more essential.

Because EDI is not just about fairness; it's about organizational strength. It builds trust, attracts talent, and improves the quality of services we deliver.



# Budgeting for What Matters- CLFE's Investment in Learning

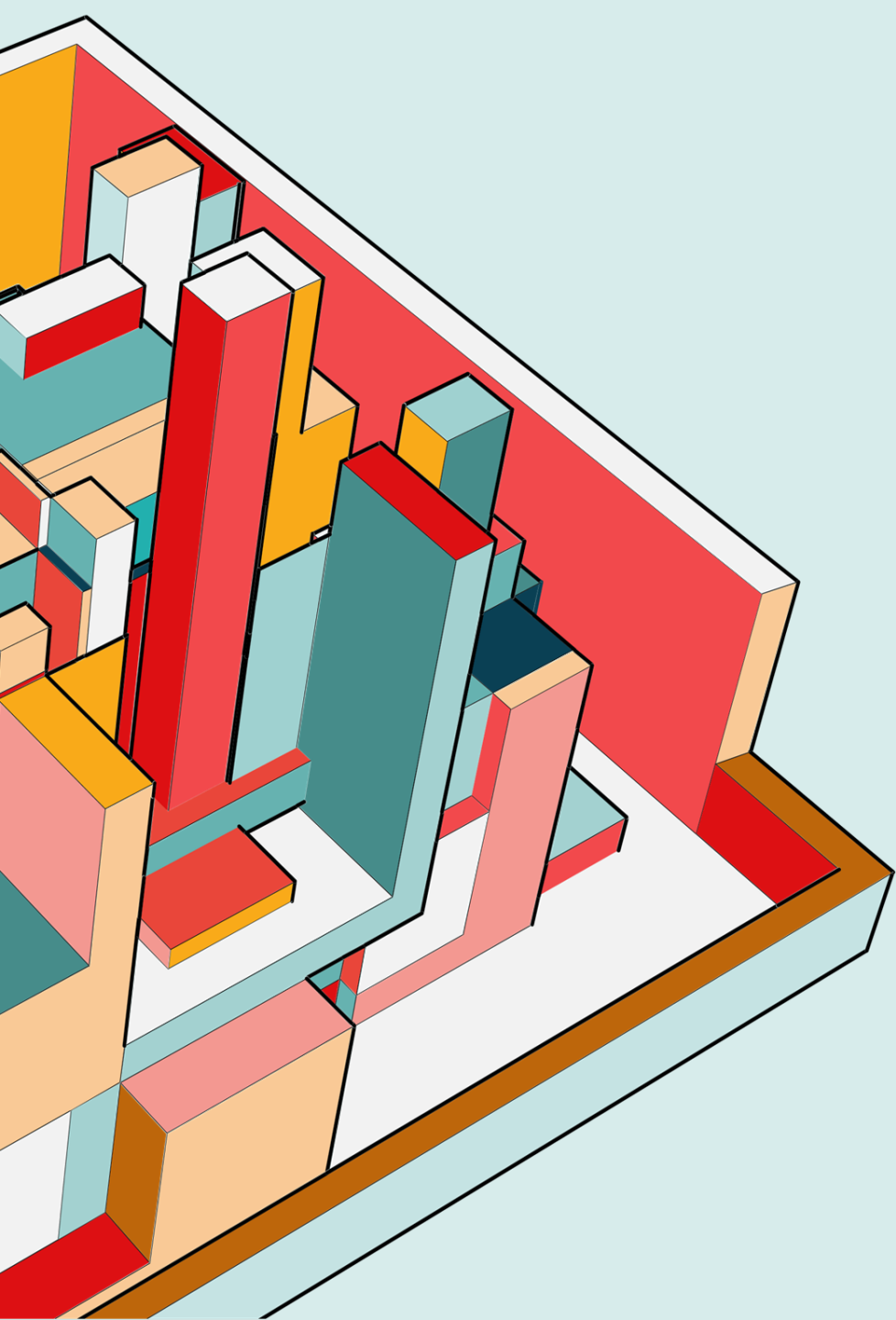
At CLFE, we've made the choice to budget for EDI training — even when budgets are tight. We see it as an investment in our people and in our mission.

Our new curriculum — IDEA: Learning Together — is a perfect example of this commitment. It's a 5-lesson program we're developing for frontline staff, managers, and people supported, covering:

- Fairness and unfairness
- Ableism and accessibility
- Racism and anti-racism
- Sexuality and gender inclusion
- Everyday respect and allyship

These sessions include interactive activities, shared storytelling, and reflection, allowing participants to learn *together* — not in isolation.

This type of program costs time and resources, but the return is invaluable: a workforce that's empathetic, aware, and confident navigating differences.



# The Business Case for Diversity

Investing in diversity isn't charity — it's smart business.

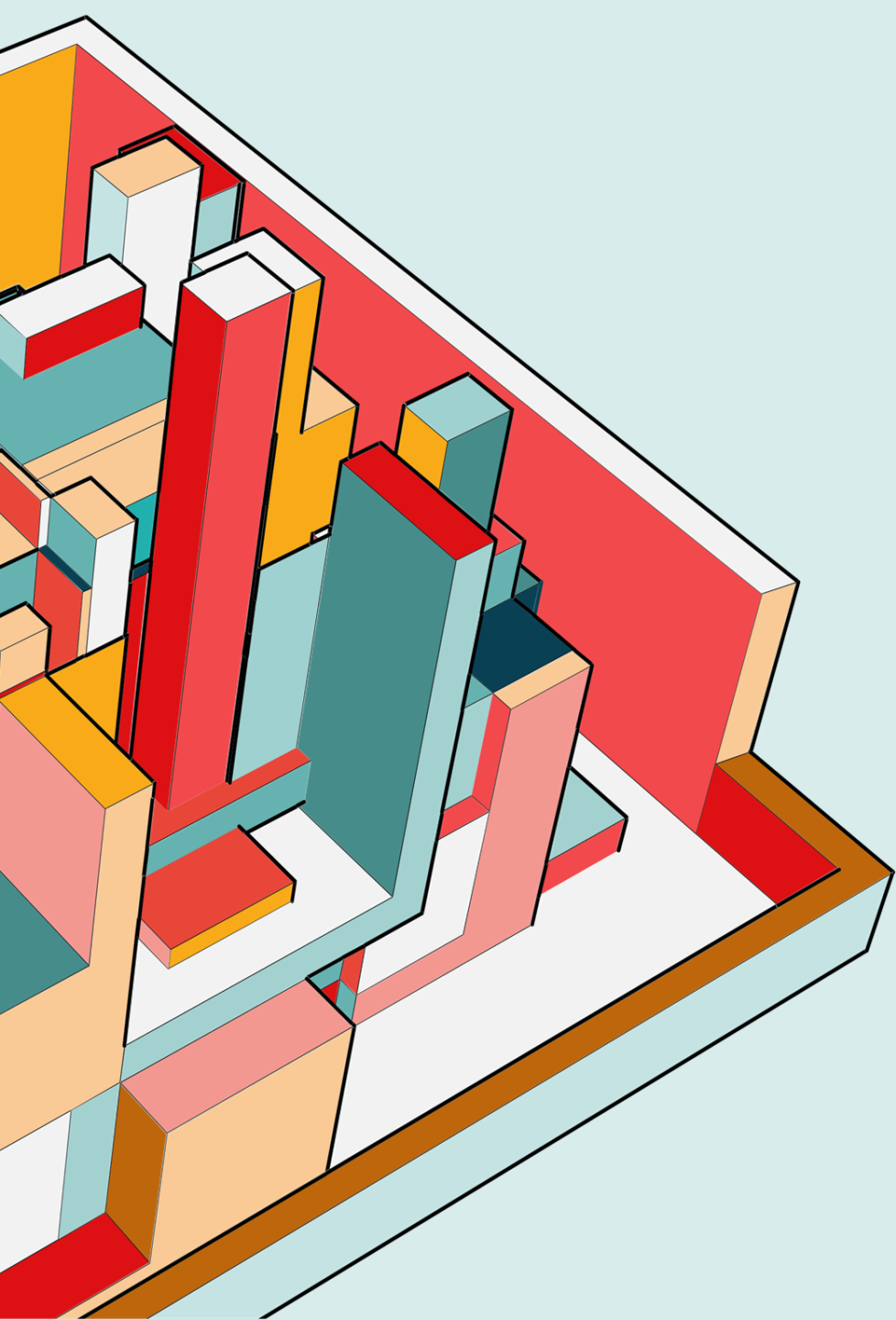
Organizations with diverse teams consistently report higher revenues, stronger innovation, and better decision-making.

The IDEA program helps CLFE tap into those benefits internally.

By engaging clients, staff, and leaders in these conversations together, we're creating a 360° understanding of inclusion. That means:

- Staff communicate more effectively across differences
- Leaders make decisions through an equity lens
- Services become more accessible and relatable to diverse communities

That alignment strengthens trust — and trust directly impacts sustainability, donations, partnerships, and long-term funding stability.



# The Takeaway — Equity is an Investment in People

Keep EDI in the budget — even modestly — and protect it from cuts. A homogenous group might agree faster, but a diverse group decides smarter.

When we bring different lived experiences together — like we're doing through IDEA — we gain fresh insights into how to serve our community better.

Recognize that programs like IDEA: Learning Together are not expenses, but *investments in culture, community, and sustainability*.

The most inclusive organizations are the ones that thrive — because they represent and serve *everyone*.

# Q&A



# RESOURCES

- Personalized Land Acknowledgement



**DIVERSITY XCHANGE**  
Discover DIVERSITY In Action

An online hub advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion across Simcoe County.

REAL Xchange

Home Knowledge Exchange Collaborate

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Resources

The screenshot shows the "Native Land Digital" website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "About", "Maps", "Contribute", "Resources", "Login", and "Contact". A search bar and a "Support Us" button are also present. The main content area features a map of Canada with various Indigenous territories highlighted in different colors. On the left side of the map, there are three toggle switches for "Territories", "Languages", and "Treaties", all of which are currently turned on. Below these toggles is a search bar labeled "Search your address" and three dropdown menus for "Search territories", "Search languages", and "Search treaties". A chat window titled "Conversation with Korero" is open in the bottom right corner, displaying a message: "Hello, I'm Korero, land and waters acknowledgment assistant." Below the chat window is another search bar labeled "Search for a place you're interested in...".

# THANK YOU

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