

OCIC ANTI-OPPRESSION & ANTI-RACISM POLICY

Anti-Oppression Policy approved by the Board of Directors January 2015; Revised June 2018; Revised April 2023 with inclusion of Anti-Racism

1.0 Statement of Philosophy and Purpose

OCIC understands that our vision requires equity and justice-centered human relations and to this end, the transformation of existing social structures across all spheres. With this Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism Policy we are outlining strategies for the Council to move from principle to practice. This policy is governed by the Ontario Human Rights Code¹, which supersedes it. As signatories to the [Anti-Racism Framework for Canada's International Cooperation Sector](#), OCIC is committed to leading a continuous anti-oppressive, anti-racist approach.

We recognize this process will be messy, iterative, intuitive and long term, and that we will make mistakes, both individually and collectively, along the way. This is why we commit to creating spaces for individual and collective learning and unlearning, to calling each other in and fostering trust for authentic community-building that embodies anti-oppressive and anti-racist practices. This policy and its monitoring and learning framework are an important aspect in our collective journey. While these do not automatically render OCIC oppression-free, eliminate oppressive organizational structures and personal behaviours, or erase grievances of previously oppressed and marginalized peoples, our commitment is to use an intersectional lens to challenge our progress toward modelling equitable and inclusive practices that center those rendered invisible and on the margins historically. This continuous self-reflexive analysis of our positionality as OCIC aims to inform our commitment and actions toward confronting and addressing oppressive and racist behaviours that are reinforced by current dominant power relations and dynamics.

This Policy draws from the lived and living experience from many staff, Board and volunteer members, and was put together through the efforts of people of colour and marginalized communities who have historically shouldered the labour of this work. Our vision is to embody an alternative future guided by our deeply intersecting policies at our heart and culture. To this end we invite our membership to reference and use this policy as a reflection point to create, shape and adopt intersectional Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism policies and practices for their own organizations.

2.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Anti-Oppression is the work of actively challenging and removing oppression perpetuated by power inequalities in society, which requires an awareness of all systems of power, whether they be on an

¹ *Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19.* http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm

institutional level i.e., in the workplace or individual expressions of oppression i.e., recognizing how you may be the oppressor.

Anti-Racism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.²

Discrimination can be described as any distinction, conduct or action, whether intentional or not, based on a person's race, which has the effect of imposing burdens, societal exclusion, or discomfort on an individual or group, not imposed upon others or which withholds or limits access to benefits available to other members of society. Race need only be a factor for racial discrimination to have occurred.³

Emotional Labour is the heightened experience of being treated differently from peers due to race/ethnicity or gender, triggering adverse effects on health and feelings of isolation and making it difficult to thrive at work.

Empowerment is the process of building the autonomy, power, confidence, and other necessary means to enact change for equality. It takes place at both the personal and collective level. On a collective level, empowerment can include organizations helping marginalized individuals access the tools they need to be empowered, such as material assets or education.⁴

Individual Oppression is demeaning and oppressive behaviour towards and treatment of a particular group or category of people, expressed through individual attitudes, beliefs and values.

Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.⁵

Microaggression refers to verbal, behavioural or environmental slights, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups, such as racialized, LGBTQ2S people, people living in poverty, people with disabilities.⁶

² Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, "Anti-Racism," The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, accessed August 12, 2022, <https://www.aclrc.com/antiracism>.

³ Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Policy_and_guidelines_on_racism_and_racial_discrimination.pdf

⁴ Holly Martinez, "What Is Social Empowerment? Empowerment Theory | United Way NCA," United Way of the National Capital Area, last modified May 24, 2022, <https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/social-empowerment/>.

⁵ As per Kimberlé Crenshaw's definition in Racial Equity Tools, "Racial Equity Tools Glossary," last modified October 2021, Racial Equity Tools, <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>.

⁶ Ibid

Oppression is the use of power or privilege by a socially, politically, economically, or culturally dominant group (or groups) to disempower (take away or reduce power), marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate another social group or category.

Power is unequally distributed - some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, allowing greater access to and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Power can be conceptualized as power over (other individuals or groups), power with (building collective strength) or power within (individual's internal strength). Power may be understood as the ability to influence others and impose one's beliefs, and is deeply connected to racism. Power can be used malignantly and intentionally, but need not be, and individuals may benefit from power of which they are unaware. Power can manifest on personal, social, institutional, or structural levels (see source for more details).⁷

Privilege is unearned social power given either formally or informally to the members of a dominant group. This social power gives them greater access to societal institutions, and is not always visible.⁸

Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic and societal.⁹

Radical Inclusion the intentional commitment to show up with an open, curious and non-judgemental posture to engage in deep listening and seeing of each other. Continuous and courageous efforts to center, and build deep understanding and foster trust will over time, enable truth-telling, psychological safety and belonging to emerge.

Systemic Oppression consists of practices, policies, laws and standards that disadvantage a particular group or category of people.

Systemic Racism is institutional and societal discrimination in policies, practices and procedures that may appear neutral but have the effect of disadvantaging racialized groups, perpetuated by a failure to identify and monitor racial disparities and inequities and to take remedial action. Anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, antisemitism and Islamophobia reflect histories of systemic exclusion, displacement and marginalization.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)

https://www3.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Policy_and_guidelines_on_racism_and_racial_discrimination.pdf

White Supremacy is the idea that white people and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs of actions are superior to those of non-white people. White supremacy is present both institutionally and culturally around the world, and white people enjoy a structural advantage because of it.¹⁰

3.0 Application and Scope

3.1 This Policy sets out the minimum standards and procedures that OCIC is to follow and applies to all OCIC staff, Board Directors and volunteers. It also applies to OCIC members, partners, funders, contracted parties and representatives when they are interacting with, engaged by, or working with or for OCIC. All are expected to be aware of this Policy and to comply fully.

3.2 The Board of Directors, Executive Director and Management Team are jointly responsible for creating awareness, prevention and deterrence of racism and all forms of oppression emerging from all interactions across the organization, and in actively building and embodying a culture of radical inclusion, trust and connection which recognizes, supports and celebrates diverse perspectives, experiences, interests and contexts.

3.3 To these ends they will jointly ensure that all employees, volunteers, members, partners, funders, contracted parties and representatives engaged with or working for OCIC are aware of and acknowledge this Policy through official communications and onboarding, orientation and annual renewal processes.

3.4 Toward achieving a more equitable and just organization and sector at large, OCIC is committed to an approach of calling people into confidential conversations first when a racist, biased, non-inclusive or oppressive incident has occurred. The willingness to acknowledge and seize the opportunity to unlearn and learn will determine the direction and process for managing violations, and desire to rectify trauma caused.

3.5 OCIC employees, Board Directors, volunteers, members, partners, funders, contracted parties and representatives engaged or working with or for OCIC found to have perpetuated racist and oppressive behavior will be invited into conversation with representatives from the Board of Directors, Executive Director and/or Management Team. The representatives will take swift and appropriate action guided by the policy and OCIC's values, and will be subject to review and scrutiny by the Board of Directors.

3.6 Any violation of this Policy will be considered as serious misconduct and may lead to significant disciplinary measures, including but not limited to suspension, termination and/or legal action.

4.0 Review

4.1 As per OCIC's 5-year review policy, this Policy is to be reviewed and/or updated by the Governance Committee by April 2028. Any changes must be approved by the OCIC Board of Directors.

¹⁰ Ibid

5.0 Policy Principle

5.1 Embracing the fundamental truth of the shared humanity of all peoples everywhere, OCIC will use an intersectional lens and put into practice our belief and commitment to eliminate internalized individual and collective biases that have given birth to all forms of oppression, including racism, which have and continue, to manifest across sectors and all social, economic, environmental and political systems.

5.2 Our commitment to building an authentic community founded on equity, inclusivity, diversity, accessibility, justice and respect across internal and external dimensions of the Council, means living out practices and processes that enable inside-out transformation.

6.0 Governance

6.1 OCIC will identify and strive to overcome barriers that may prevent individuals from communities systemically underrepresented in the international cooperation sector in Canada from becoming Board Directors or from accessing our services, and will seek to recruit Board Director nominees with a combination of relevant professional and lived/living experience, education, skills, competencies, perspectives, interest and creativity.

6.2 Newly elected Board Directors will receive an orientation to OCIC's Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism Policy, and Monitoring and Learning Framework, and to their shared responsibilities for their implementation and oversight.

6.3 When developing or reviewing existing OCIC organizational policies, procedures and/or practices, OCIC employees, Board Directors, volunteers and consultants will use intersectional, anti-oppressive and anti-racist frameworks as a point of reference and bring recommendations forward that reinforce equity.

6.4 An intersectional Advisory Committee may be established to support OCIC employees, Board Directors and volunteers in monitoring and analysis of progress, and supporting OCIC to center perspectives, voices and priorities of historically marginalized colleagues and groups.

7.0 Personnel and Volunteers

7.1 OCIC will collect, review and analyze data relating to our employee and volunteer recruitment, engagement, retention and promotion practices of colleagues from historically marginalized sections of society to inform equitable and inclusive hiring and retention practices.

7.2 OCIC will actively seek and invite applicants for employment and volunteer positions from various cultural, ethnic, educational, social, backgrounds, communities and partners, valuing diverse skills, perspectives and lived/living experiences as a key qualification.

7.3 OCIC employees and volunteers will select candidates with the requisite knowledge and experience managing or working in a diverse workforce and competence engaging across cultures, perspectives, experiences and interests.

7.4 OCIC employees and volunteers will be treated without discrimination based on factors including, but not limited to, age, race, colour, culture, religion, creed, ethnicity, language, disability, socio-economic status, ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, family or marital status, number of dependents, record of offenses, receipt of public assistance, citizenship, or residency/migratory status in hiring, termination, training, upgrading, remuneration, promotion, transfer, lay-off, recall, discipline and ongoing management.

7.5 Employees and volunteers will receive an orientation to OCIC's Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism Policy, and Monitoring and Learning Framework, and to their shared responsibilities for their implementation and oversight.

8.0 Organizational Work Culture

8.1 OCIC will model an authentic work culture where trust is built and maintained, and psychological safety invites everyone to show up as they are without fear of being invisibilized. OCIC will seek to foster a safe, inclusive work culture that recognizes the unique and intersectional identities of employees, volunteers, members and partners, and encourages trust and psychological safety, happiness, wellbeing and personal care for all.

8.2 OCIC acknowledges that those who have faced and continue to face systemic and individual racism and oppression frequently take on additional emotional labour by virtue of their identities and lived experiences and may require time, platforms, networks and/or other specific acknowledgment and recognition for contributions, expertise, lived experience, potential, etc., to thrive in the workplace. OCIC will support employees and volunteers in identifying and meeting their respective workplace needs, within the parameters detailed in other organizational policies, contracts and legal obligations.

8.3 OCIC commits to continuously acknowledge systematized power imbalances at play across the institution and to recognize people, particularly from historically marginalized groups and sections of society, for their emotional, psychological and cultural labour and contributions, and the wealth of their lived/living experiences toward dismantling racism and oppression within the sector.

9.0 Programs

9.1 OCIC acknowledges that our programs are inherently more accessible to some individuals and/or groups than to others. To address this we commit to meaningful collaboration with our members and partners, prioritizing and centering historically invisibilized, marginalized and dispossessed voices, perspectives and experiences in program design, development, implementation and evaluation.

9.2 OCIC will strive to create and maintain a positive, safe, inclusive and physically accessible space for all during all meetings, orientations, training, gatherings and conferences, and will use a consensus-based approach to decision-making where possible.

9.3 Using an intersectional lens, we commit to identifying and eliminating oppression and racism in all of our programs, to using our platforms to support an anti-oppressive, anti-racist agenda, and to ensuring

that all materials, practices and programs are reviewed for discriminatory bias, racism and stereotypes, and revised accordingly.

9.4 We commit to working to build inclusive approaches that foster trust and encourage members to ensure their public communications practices, brand guidelines, fundraising and fund solicitation, advocacy and key partner engagement practices are intersectional, anti-oppressive and anti-racist. We will share relevant resources and capacity building opportunities, drawing on the expertise, perspectives and experiences of members and colleagues from systemically underrepresented groups.

9.5 OCIC understands that effectively engaging Canadians in the fight against global poverty, structural violence, environmental degradation and a range of other international issues is fundamentally a fight about justice and the desire for sustainable, transformational solutions to current global crises. Within OCIC programs, projects and activities we will collaborate to create inclusive spaces and platforms where those on the margins of society can advocate for themselves, thereby ensuring cooperation and participation processes are truly equitable, available and accessible to all.

10.0 Membership

10.1 OCIC will apply an intersectional lens in actively seeking and inviting applicants for membership, including historically marginalized, racialized and oppressed groups in society.

10.2 Every OCIC member will be treated without discrimination based on factors including, but not limited to, age, race, colour, culture, religion, creed, ethnicity, language, disability, socio-economic status, ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, family or marital status, number of dependents, record of offenses, receipt of public assistance, citizenship, or residency/migratory status.

11.0 Sustainability

11.1 OCIC will screen all potential sources of funding for alignment with our anti-oppressive and anti-racist model, and will endeavour to avoid partnerships with companies and organizations which are known to be discriminatory or oppressive, locally or globally.

11.2 OCIC will share our anti-oppressive and anti-racist focus, policy and strategies with all members, donors, funders and supporters, and will ensure these are available and easily accessible.

12.0 Managing & Reporting Violations to this Policy

12.1 OCIC recognizes that it owes a duty of care towards everyone involved in a complaint. OCIC further recognizes that reporting alleged incidents of oppressive and/or racist behaviour is a very sensitive, private and emotionally complex matter. OCIC commits to investigating and documenting reports with compassion, consideration and sensitivity to all involved.

- Anyone who experiences or witnesses oppressive and/or racist behaviour while engaged in the activities of the Council, or who has received a disclosure of the same, may make a confidential written report on [OCIC's website](#) using the Incident Report Form, or may directly

report verbally to the OCIC Executive Director or Chair of the Board of Directors (see OCIC website for contact information).

- Reports may be submitted anonymously without fear of retaliation professionally or personally and will be treated confidentially to the fullest extent practical. Only parties with a need to know should be advised of a report and any related investigation.
- If a report is received verbally, the individual who receives the report must complete or assist the complainant in completing a written report.

12.2 As noted in 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, reports regarding oppressive or racist behaviour will be addressed directly through an assigned representative(s) in a timely manner, drawing from the principles outlined in OCIC's Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy, as applicable.

12.3 Aside from review/scrutiny by the Board of Directors of individual violation or misconduct, the Board will also review an annual summary of violations and results, and provide further comment or advice for OCIC training and interventions.