Taking Action in Our Spheres of Influence

Intersectional Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression
Gender-Based Violence Framework

Developed by Nicole Bernhardt and Annelies Cooper

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This document was prepared on behalf of the **Ontario Association of Interval Houses** (OAITH), a coalition of first stage emergency women's shelters, second stage housing organizations and community-based women organizations who work towards ending all forms of violence and oppression against all women, girls and gender-diverse individuals. OAITH achieves this through training, education, advocacy, public awareness and government relations."

Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses

Taking Action in Our Spheres of Influence:

Intersectional Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression
Gender-Based Violence Framework

What is an Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Framework?

This framework seeks to connect the values and commitments of the OAITH Intersectional Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression Policy (2021) to individual and institutional practices and approaches in OAITH, membership organizations, and their representatives. The framework directs our gaze both inward, towards individual and interpersonal daily practices within OAITH, and outward, towards the communities we serve. This framework considers how the programming, practices, and services in OAITH and membership organizations attend to those groups that are most adversely impacted by systemic racism.

Embarking on anti-racist and anti-oppressive work within the gender-based violence (GBV) sector also involves thinking critically about the interconnectedness between this sector and other sectors in the lived experiences of women, girls, and gender-diverse communities. Experiences of racism and oppression in the justice system, education system, healthcare, social services, and child welfare compound experiences of violence and complicate programming and service needs. Accordingly, developing an anti-racist and anti-oppressive framework involves adopting a broad understanding of community and violence, to further an integrative and holistic approach to achieving social justice.

This framework draws on the insights, best practices, and strategies in place both within the GBV sector and beyond to offer examples, guidance and considerations for developing and sustaining an intersectional anti-racist and anti-oppressive approach.

LEARNING FROM OTHER SECTORS

HIV Resources Ontario:

"An Anti-racism/Anti-oppression (ARAO) framework, at an organizational level, is a way of looking at our work in the sector, which allows us to change our personal and systemic practices in order to reduce or eliminate service barriers for our clients. It is a process that starts with continuous self-reflection as individuals and as organizations, but moves the organization (its staff, its volunteers and peers, and its board of directors) to concrete, planned changes to policy and programs – changes that result in better health outcomes for our clients."

How is this framework intersectional?

We use intersectionality not only to draw attention to how oppression and violence flow from the intersection of multiple identities, but further to connect "individual and group experiences of disadvantage based on intersecting identities to *broader systems of power and privilege*" (Ajele and McGill, 2020: 5, emphasis added). This use of intersectionality is consciously structural and political.

Structural intersectionality avoids treating social identity categories as fixed and natural and instead explores how these categories are tied to larger forces, histories, and systems that create and reinforce inequitable power relations. Structural intersectionality can be used to analyze how policies and programs that focus on a "single axis of social division" (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016: 2) fail to account for the complexity of people's lived experiences. For instance, structural intersectionality isn't just about *being* a Black woman with a disability; structural intersectionality considers how a society that treats being white, male, and able-bodied as the norm *impacts* experiences of exclusion and discrimination, and *reproduces* unequal systems and policy gaps.

Our use of intersectionality is also decidedly political in that we see intersectionality as a necessary approach to dismantling systems of racism and oppression to build a more just and equitable society. This approach is distinct from depoliticized invocations of intersectionality, which strive to be broadly inclusive of all social identity categories but do not address inequitable structures. In the words of Sirma Bilge, depoliticized intersectionality valorizes "difference without consequences, recognition without redistribution" (2013: 409). Depoliticized intersectionality can also function as a way of changing the conversation by pointing out a different conversation that we could be having – also known as "whataboutism." Within an anti-racist context "whataboutism" involves posing the question "What about [insert topic that I would rather talk about]?" to shift focus away from racism. As expressed by Sara Ahmed, "when hearing about race and racism is too difficult, intersectionality can be deployed as a defense against hearing" (2012: 195, n. 18). A politically oriented intersectionality can include the possibility of stepping back from intersectionality to have a *focused discussion* on racism or colonization, and then thinking through how intersectional considerations complicate our understanding of how racism or colonization is active within a particular context.

How does this framework connect racism, oppression, and colonialism?

This document was prepared in Ontario, Canada, where the colonization of Indigenous Peoples and their territories has taken the specific formation of settler colonialism—whereby the colonizing power has established itself and asserts governing authority in ways that seek to subsume and contain Indigenous Peoples' inherent claims to legal and political jurisdiction on these lands.

This framework understands racism and colonialism to be foundational to Canada and embedded in social, political, and economic relations. Racism in Canada has historically specific foundations rooted in colonization and the construction of a white majority settler colonial society. Racist ideology is interwoven in these processes, in which the colonization, dispossession, and subjugation of Indigenous peoples was made possible through the racist construction of Indigenous peoples as 'savage' and 'uncivilized' (Thobani, 2007). The development of Canada as a settler colony relied upon enslavement, racial segregation, and exclusions from schools, civil society and economic discrimination that laid a foundation for structural racial inequity and anti-Black racism (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2005). Anti-Black racism persists through "attaching criminality and danger" to Black communities (Maynard, 2017: 41). Non-Black people of colour are also subject to systemic racialized hierarchies and logics that render them 'others' who represent a threat to the nation and are outside of belonging (Thobani, 2007), as can be traced through Canada's history of discriminatory laws based on race, such as the Chinese head tax, Japanese internment, and restrictive immigration policies (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2005).

Although Canada now has an official policy on multiculturalism, these histories have an enduring effect and the 'othering' of non-white people in Canada remains a systemic issue. Racialization of non-white migrants is the construction of difference and/or inferiority from any combination of physical attributes, name, accent, clothing, diet, religious beliefs and practices, cultural practices, places of origin, and citizenship status. Islamophobia is one manifestation of this, which targets Muslim peoples based on physical, cultural, linguistic, and religious identifiers (Ahmad 2018). In the Canadian context, anti-racism must include identifying how large-scale migration impacts Indigenous lands, and how discourses of multiculturalism can obscure claims to Indigenous rights and self-determination (Amadahy and Lawrence, 2009).

A note on terminology:

While we offer definitions throughout, as well as accompanying sourced glossary (see Appendix A), we take the time here to identify some key terminology choices. We refer throughout to Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, and avoid the acronym BIPOC, to stress the distinct operation of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racisms and to avoid subsuming all racialized people into a singular group. We treat race as a discursive and relational—not a biological—construct, recognizing that its meaning is always historically and socially contingent. We draw on Abigail Bakan and Enakshi Dua's (2014: 6) account of racism as "the body of ideas and practices that establishes, maintains, and perpetuates such [race-based] categories of difference, sustained through multiple, varied, and contextually specific social, political, and economic constructions." We use oppression to refer to a pattern of persistent and systematic disadvantage imposed on large groups of people, in many domains of social life, including employment, social status, treatment by the legal system, and vulnerability to violence. Finally, we recognize that colonialism is an ongoing set of unequal relations through the political, legal, physical, and cultural domination of one peoples by another.

A note on process:

This framework was developed in collaboration with OAITH and through engagement with OAITH membership. OAITH members were invited to participate in contributing to the framework through an online survey that solicited input on guiding principles and identified gaps in resources; a facilitated roundtable with interested OAITH members which provided in-depth experiential input and contribution to the framework; and finally, interviews with targeted OAITH members who have developed existing resources and frameworks to identify effective strategies, lessons learned, and potential challenges. Throughout the process, OAITH staff have contributed their expertise ensuring that the approach and materials are responsive to the current needs of the GBV sector. We do, however, wish to acknowledge that engagement was limited due to sector-wide capacity shortages as the engagement period coincided with spiking community spread of COVID-19. Nonetheless, engagement deeply informed this framework, and we express our gratitude to all who participated. We hope this framework can serve as a resource alongside the existing work being done on anti-racism and anti-oppression in the GBV sector more broadly.

Guiding Principles

01   **Intentional and Proactive:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression is about committing to ongoing actions to fight racial inequity. Anti-racism and anti-oppression acknowledges that systemic racism exists and actively confronts the unequal power dynamic between groups and the structures that sustain it.

02   **Accountability:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression requires a willingness to be held accountable for providing equitable practices and programs, an openness to receive feedback on the impact of our actions, and a commitment to take responsibility for our own behaviour, words, and learning.

03   **Ongoing Assessment:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression entails taking steps to measure, assess, and understand the structures that support or impede racialized women and gender-diverse communities from living in an Ontario that is safe, equitable and just for all.

04   **Impact-focused:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression includes a commitment to create programs, policies and services that support those groups that are most adversely impacted by systemic racism, white supremacy, colonialism, and interlocking oppressions, including Indigenous and Black communities.

05   **Structurally-integrated:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression involves an understanding that ending all forms of gender-based violence and oppression includes eradicating racial and colonial violence.

06   **Intersectional:** Strategies and tactics to address systemic racism barriers must take into consideration the way racism interacts with and is reinforced by other histories and structures of oppression (such as colonialism, classism, ableism, heteronormativity, and gender-based violence).

Spheres of Influence

Identifying—and working from within—one's own spheres of influence enables us to make localized changes, stand in solidarity with equity-seeking communities, and advance anti-racism and anti-oppression in concrete ways. Recognizing that we each have the power to develop and maintain anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices on personal, relational, institutional, and communal scales serves to reinforce our own accountability and agency. This approach pushes back against what Ibram X. Kendi (2019: 140) refers to as the "powerless defense." The powerless defense treats power as a binary rather than a continuum, and in so doing fails to consider people at all levels of power and their respective ability to advance or impede anti-racist transformation.

Additionally, an intersectional approach requires moving beyond binary articulations of systems of power—such as patriarchy and racism—in order to account for what Patricia Hill Collins (2000: 228) terms the "matrix of domination." An intersectional approach recognizes that the binaries of privilege/disadvantage and oppressor/oppressed exist within a single self. We employ the spheres of influence framing to breakdown the different scales of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice while still recognizing shared — but differentiated responsibility.

Adapted from: Best Advocacy Movement (n.d.).

○ **Individual:** Investigating your own positionality and privilege, cultivating intentionality, exercising self-reflection, and practicing accountability.

○ **Interpersonal:** Considering yourself in relation to others to avoid practices that reinforce inequitable racial exclusions and to cultivate more equitable environments.

○ **Institutional:** Collecting and assessing demographic data, developing and monitoring policies, practices and decision-making processes, and reviewing organizational culture and norms.

○ **Community:** Understanding your community and those most impacted by structural racism, cultivating relationships, co-resistance, and dismantling sectoral power imbalances and funding inequality.

Individual
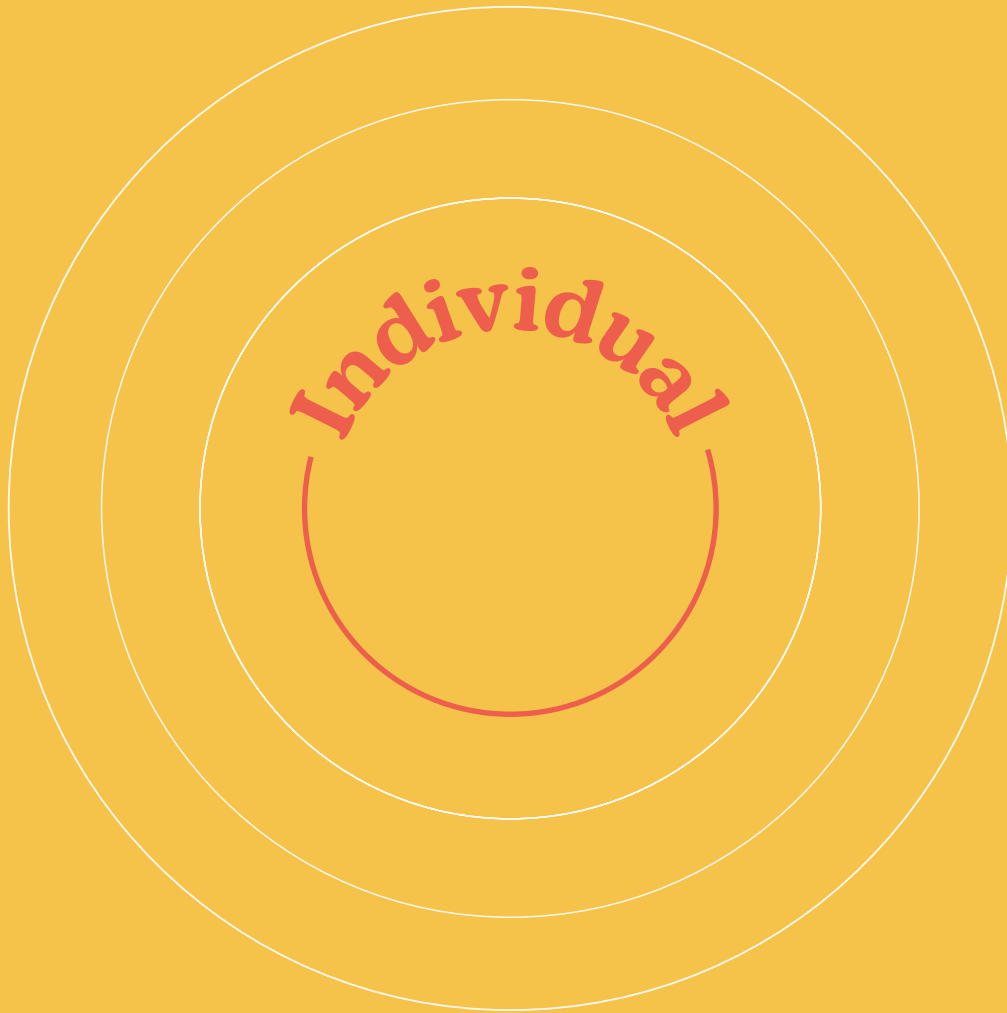
> " The beauty of anti-racism is that you don't have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it's the only way forward. "

Ijeoma Oluo, author of *So You Want to Talk about Race?*

Sphere of Influence: Individual

What does it mean to commit to anti-racism and anti-oppression proactively and intentionally?
Acknowledging the existence of racial inequity and systemic oppression requires us to consider our personal position within systems of power and oppression, and examine our personal biases, preferences, privileges, knowledge, and ignorance.

Committing to anti-racism and anti-oppression at the individual level (the sphere of our influence that encompasses our beliefs and values, our worldviews, and our lens of understanding and interpreting the world) looks like cultivating a practice of ongoing learning and self-reflection to locate ourselves within power relations. This includes but goes beyond "listening" and "learning." It incorporates that learning into an informed, active practice of examining our own positionality within unequal and inequitable power dynamics and locating where our existing values, beliefs, knowledge, and biases may be replicating racist and/or oppressive logics that justify, support, and normalize racial inequity, ableism, misogyny, heteropatriarchy, and xenophobia.

OAITH's Intersectional Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression Policy recognizes that at the individual level, racism and oppression can manifest in OAITH spaces and in the GBV sector because of learned behaviour in individuals because of colonization, white supremacy, and patriarchal methods of governing society. The policy commits to supporting OAITH members and representatives to engage in continuous learning, self-education, and reflexivity to unlearn these behaviours.

Situated Knowledge/Positionality

Positionality refers to an individual's socio-political context, specifically their social location in relation to hierarchies of power. Identities such as gender, race, class, ability, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and citizenship—and the ways in which those identities are privileged or marginalized—structure our positionality.

Feminist standpoint theorists point out that positionality informs how we see the world. Knowledge, therefore, is socially situated, and those who are oppressed have access to knowing oppressive structures intimately from lived experience of navigating dominant culture from positions of marginality in ways that those who are privileged by structures of power do not. Situated knowledge enables insights into how power functions in ways that those who benefit from power structures do not understand, as they do not have the experience of navigating those power relations.

Understanding our own identities and how we are positioned within power relations empowers us to hone our standpoint, or how our knowledge is situated in social and political relations. Doing so in relation to our work is part of the commitment to intentionally and proactively unpack our own access to privilege and power, as well as to identify our own biases and ignorance.

Intentionality

Practicing anti-racism and anti-oppression in the individual sphere requires a degree of intentionality to how we conduct ourselves and the language we use. When we are intentional, we are consciously bringing an anti-racist and anti-oppressive lens to our thinking, our language, and our behaviour. This requires a deliberate and purposive practice of self-reflection.

Often those who are asked to examine their behaviours or language for racism and oppression react defensively and centre on the ways in which their intentions were not harmful. This is not a productive response when discussing racism and oppression, as it shifts the focus from those impacted, to the person who may have caused harm, even if unwittingly. What is meant by intentionality in this framework is a practice of proactively approaching problems with an anti-racist and anti-oppressive lens. However, we can acknowledge that even when we have good intentions, our actions can have adverse impact, and we commit to holding ourselves accountable to those, regardless of intention.

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is a crucial part of the ongoing effort to practice anti-racism and anti-oppression. Ibram X. Kendi asserts that "racist and anti-racist are not fixed identities…the movement from racist to antiracist is always ongoing" (2019: 17). This ongoing movement encompasses the work of identifying racist ideas, practices, and policies and actively working to undo them. Self-reflection is a key tool at the sphere of the individual for working to identify ideas, practices, and language that we have internalized that perpetuate racism and racial inequity, as well as other social inequalities.

Accountability

Demonstrating accountability means to acknowledge when harm is committed and to actively take steps to repair damage and transform the root of the harm. On an individual level, proactive accountability looks like engaging in the work of internal investigation of your own beliefs, practices, learned narratives and behaviours to identify what work you have yet to do to unlearn the ways in which you may replicate racist and oppressive ideas and practices. Doing this work proactively, in the sphere of the individual, enables us to better demonstrate accountability in our relationships, our institutions, and our communities. Acknowledging the existence of harmful learned behaviours and ideas, as well as our access to privilege, introduces us to feelings that can be painful and uncomfortable, such as shame, fear, guilt, and trauma (Russo, 2013). These feelings don't mean you are being harmed. They are part of the process of learning and growing and may be necessary to experience in order to move forward to practice accountability. Proactively doing internal accountability work to process these emotions when they arise can help us to understand how to better react and respond when we are asked to take accountability in our relationships, institutions, and communities.

Privilege

Conversations about privilege can often provoke defensiveness in us because we think about our own struggles to get to where we have gone. We want to believe what we have achieved is a product of our own hard work. But privilege isn't a binary concept. People have access to privilege by degrees, and can have access to privilege in some ways, even if there are other privileges they are denied (such as cis male privilege). Black Lives Matter activist, Janaya Future Khan, explains that "privilege isn't about what you've gone through; it's about what you haven't had to go through" (2020). If we respond to the concept of privilege with defensiveness, or seek innocence to systemic structures of power, then we are avoiding acknowledging the systemic nature of inequity and injustice.

**Taking Action in Our Spheres of Influence**

Putting it into action:

- ▶ **Acknowledge** systemic racism and oppressive power structures.
  - ▷ *Prompt: How do race and racism manifest in my own life?*

- ▶ **Reflect** on your own assumptions, biases, and preferences.
  - ▷ *Prompt: Where do I have access to privilege that might be a gap? Where do I make assumptions that may exclude certain groups of people? Who do I think of as 'the good client' or 'the bad client'?*

- ▶ **Proactively seek resources** for self-education, especially where you have located your own gaps.
  - ▷ *Prompt: Do I rely on others to educate me on race and racism? Where can I be proactive in enriching my understanding of different groups, cultures, and perspectives?*

- ▶ **Investigate** your relationship to systems of power and privilege.
  - ▷ *Prompt: How has my positionality shaped my access to material, cultural, and social resources? What have I not had to experience because of my access to (white settler) privilege?*

- ▶ **Recognize** your own positionality and other people's standpoint.
  - ▷ *Prompt: How does my standpoint inform my way of seeing the world? Do I 'see' racism? What issues are not mine to speak to?*

- ▶ **Take accountability** for your own ways of thinking and internalized biases by proactively taking steps to unlearn harmful learned beliefs.
  - ▷ *Prompt: Do I acknowledge when I've caused harm? In what ways do I need to work on transforming my perspectives and beliefs?*

- ▶ **Commit** to this individual work as an ongoing endeavor.
  - ▷ *Prompt: Do I assume "I'm not racist," or do I practice ongoing self-reflection in order to continually integrate anti-racism into my worldview and behaviours?*

SPOTLIGHT

"Me and White Supremacy: A Guided Journal" by Layla Saad

Me and White Supremacy: A Guided Journal is a self-guided workbook that "has been designed to help you to take ownership of your participation in the oppressive system of white supremacy, and to help you take responsibility for dismantling the way that this system manifests both within you and within your communities" (Saad, 2018). It was developed by Layla Saad, a British writer, speaker and racial justice advocate. The Journal is an educational tool for doing the work at the individual level to guide people with white privilege in the inner work of dismantling and unlearning white supremacy and internalized racism and facilitate change. It provides 28 days of material to deepen your knowledge, and journaling prompts to promote your personal self-reflection.

Interpersonal

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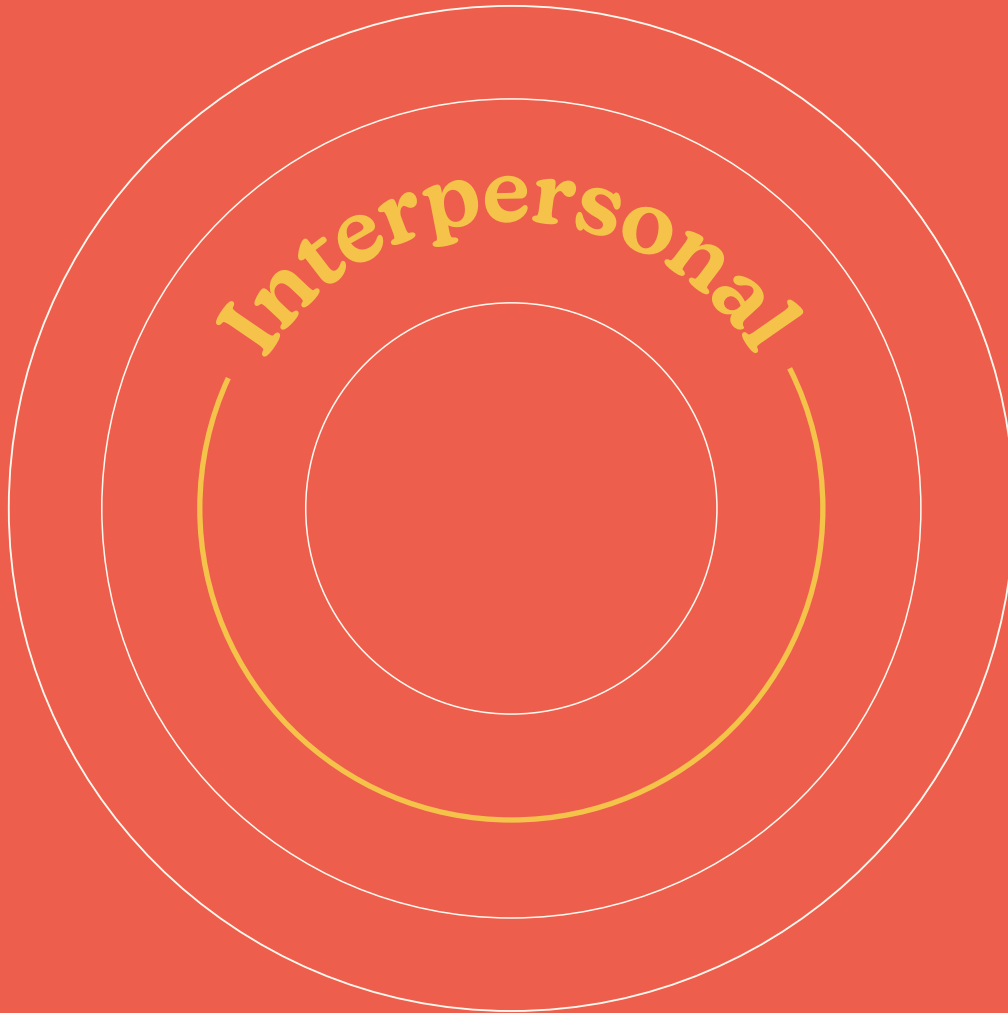
If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

"

Lilla Watson, Murri activist and educator

Sphere of Influence: Interpersonal

A critical component of anti-racist and anti-oppression work is thinking through how we actively cultivate spaces where Black, Indigenous and racialized clients, volunteers, students, employees, management, and board members are provided the opportunity to flourish. Regardless of where we are situated within the organizations where we work, live or volunteer, we have daily opportunities to challenge racism and oppression, and engage in more just interactions with those with whom we share space. Here, within the interpersonal sphere of influence, we look to those interpersonal practices that cultivate more equitable environments and those practices that serve to reinforce inequitable exclusions and racial hierarchies.

Interrupting Microaggressions

The concept of 'microaggressions' was first introduced by Black American Harvard-trained psychiatrist Chester Pierce to describe subtle racial put-downs which serve to discredit and exclude Blacks operating in predominantly white spaces. Monnica T. Williams highlights that as opposed to explicit acts of racial discrimination microaggressions are "particularly stressful for those on the receiving end given their ubiquity and *deniability*" (2020, emphasis added). Microaggressions have a cumulative adverse impact, which can be understood as a form of chronic stress. These impacts include many negative mental-health (e.g., anxiety, depression, substance abuse and reduced self-efficacy) and physical health (e.g., hypertension and impaired immune response) consequences (Sue et al, 2007; Williams, 2020).

Racial microaggressions are intimately tied to racist assumption and stereotypes, such as:

- "When I see you, I don't see color." (Signaling that the person doesn't acknowledge the social/institutional impact of being Black, Indigenous, or racialized.)

- "We are all one race: the human race." (Signaling that Black, Indigenous, and racialized experiences are interchangeable and no different from the experience of white people.)

- "You are so articulate." (Signaling that Black, Indigenous, and racialized people are not usually capable of competent intellectual conversation.)

- "I see your hair is big today! Are you planning to wear it like that to the client meeting?" (Signaling that natural Black hairstyles are not professional.)

- "Everyone can succeed in society if they work hard enough." (Signaling that disparate outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and racialized people result from laziness or personal failings.)

(Above list modified from Washington, Birch & Roberts, 2020)

Microaggressions serve to establish and reinforce organizational hierarchies and make it much more difficult for members of historically excluded groups to find belonging within institutional spaces. In this way, the presence of microaggressions detracts from institutional efforts to promote equity and inclusion, and attract and retain Black, Indigenous, and racialized staff. Additionally, microaggressions directed at clients and their dependents detract from service providers' ability to offer a safe space from which to escape violence.

Cultivating Equitable Environments

When we imagine equitable environments, we are not picturing spaces where mistakes never happen or where everyone always knows the perfect thing to say. Instead, we are imaging environments where people feel prepared to discuss racial justice issues, make room for affect, are able to call-out microaggressions and other problematic behaviours, and are better equipped to support Black, Indigenous, and racialized colleagues and clients.

→ **Front-end racial justice conversation.** Establishing equitable spaces requires intentionality and preparation. Build-in opportunities to consider anti-racism and anti-oppression issues and concerns during scheduled discussions and team meetings. Consider creating shared guidelines and discussing shared expectations that anticipate difficult moments and the possibility of microaggressions occurring. Think through how you want to handle these moments as a team and how the experiences of those most impacted by structural racism can be prioritized in these moments (see Appendix B).

→ **Make space for affect** (e.g., anger, sadness, embarrassment) in recognition that discussions around social justice, racism and oppression are difficult and are likely to be emotionally impactful. Don't silence or dismiss conversations and contributions just because they are emotionally charged. Allow Black, Indigenous, and racialized people to share their experiences on their own terms, recognize that these conversations can be exhausting for those who are subject to racism, and refrain from making additional demands on Black, Indigenous, and racialized people in these discussions to explain or evidence racism.

→ **Be open to call outs**. Getting called out means when you say or do something that upholds the oppression of a historically marginalized group of people it is brought to your attention (see Franchesca Ramsey on "Getting Called Out and How to Apologize,'" YouTube Sept 6, 2013). Communicate with others around you that you are committed to using respectful language and engaging in equitable practices and that you appreciate when others make you aware when you fall short of this commitment. While some social justice advocates prefer the language of "calling in" instead of "calling out" we want to be careful not to suggest that raising anti-racism or anti-oppression concerns must be framed in a particular way in order to be valid (sometimes referred to as "tone-policing"). Instead, we want to echo the words of one GBV leader who described themselves as: "calling you out, to call you in." By taking responsibility for calling-out problematic comments when we hear them, we are demonstrating care and trust in those around us that they (like us) are able to grow in this area. We approach this responsibility with humility, understanding, and recognition of the intellectual labour that has gone into the social justice knowledge that we currently hold and that we will always have more to learn.

→ **Maintaining supportive practices**. Pam Palmater, a Mi'kmaq lawyer, author, and social justice activist, calls on non-Indigenous Canadians to be "respectful allies, not saviours" (as quoted by Haiven, Nov 7, 2018). Whereas saviours seek to liberate racialized 'others' through charity and position themselves as the authority on what needs to be done, respectful allyship involves a willingness to take direction from those subject to racism on the kinds of supports are needed and welcome. Respectful allyship involves speaking up—but not over—and crediting the work, and recognizing the agency, of Indigenous, Black, and racialized voices.

Putting it into action:

▶ **Echo and elevate** Black, Indigenous, and racialized voices, resources, and concerns. Make sure the conversation doesn't move past these concerns and instead take the time to pause and reflect on the contributions of Black, Indigenous, and racialized voices. Avoid taking credit for these concerns or contributions, but instead look for opportunities to use your voice to amplify these concerns.

▷ *Prompt: I heard [. . .] voice that we haven't taken sufficient time to explore the impact of this program on [. . .], I'd like us to spend some time on that."*

▶ **Normalize making mistakes** and being corrected. This does not entail minimizing the impact of microaggressions or racially inflected mistakes, but accepts that cultivating equitable and anti-racist practices requires constructive feedback.

▷ *Prompt: "It had been my practice to [. . .], but having been corrected by/having read/having reflected I have changed to doing [. . .]."*

▶ **Call out with kindness.** Identify and challenge microaggressions when you hear them. Be willing to call people out, to call them back in.

▷ *Prompt: "That comment raises some concerns for me, I want to make sure I understood you correctly."*

▶ **Thank those who voice concerns** in recognition that addressing microaggressions is risky and tiring. Express appreciation to those who take on the labour of unpacking problematic behaviours and comments, in recognition that they are potentially saving you and/or the organization from more embarrassing or costly errors in the future.

▷ *Prompt: "Thank you. I really appreciate you making me aware of this and will do [. . .] to be more aware/not use that word again/address this going forward."*

Institutional

"

The biggest problem is inertia. It is a historically racist system and so you don't have to do any bad thing for racism to perpetuate itself.

All you have to do is nothing.

"

Frances Henry, Enakshi Dua, Carl E. James, Audrey Kobayashi, Peter Li, Howard Ramos, and Malinda S. Smith, from *The Equity Myth*

Sphere of Influence: Institutional

Anti-racism and anti-oppression within an institutional context involve the recognition that systemic racism can result from doing things the way they have always been done. This approach looks beyond representational diversity to ensure that not only are racialized faces present within organizations, but in addition, voices identifying the persistence of racial inequities have the opportunity to be heard. This entails creating space for Black, Indigenous, and racialized people to meaningfully shape institutional content. Within the institutional sphere of influence, we look to demographic data, policies, practices and decision-making processes, and organizational culture.

Institutions within Ontario are obligated under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* to provide services and employment that are free from discrimination. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) describes discrimination as "any form of unequal treatment based on a *Code* ground that results in disadvantage, whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. It may be intentional or unintentional. It may involve direct actions that are discriminatory on their face, or it may involve rules, practices or procedures that appear neutral, but have the effect of disadvantaging certain groups of people. It may be obvious, or it may occur in very subtle ways." Systemic discrimination involves patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage for Black, Indigenous, and racialized persons.

Demographic Data Collection and Ongoing Assessment

Institutions committed to promoting substantive equity should collect demographic data to help identify and monitor systemic racism and racial disparities. This data may include information related to Indigenous identity, race, religion, ethnic origin,

and intersecting social divisions such as gender and ability. The OHRC takes the position "that data collection and analysis should be undertaken where an organization or institution has or ought to have reason to believe that discrimination, systemic barriers or the perpetuation of historical disadvantage may potentially exist." The Ontario Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism provides institutional guidance for planning, collecting, and analyzing race-based data collection. The Anti-Racism Data standards also offer plain language suggestions on how to ask questions about race and other demographic categories.

As was made clear during the Covid-19 pandemic, socio-demographic data collection can lead "to changes in the public health response" and can improve the "equity of the response" (McKenzie, 2021). Demographic data was used to demonstrate that Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and to inform a public health response that was specifically attentive to these communities. Similarly, we heard from members of the GBV sector that are collecting demographic data to identify disproportionalities in service provision and staffing, improve programming, and inform survivor advocacy work. We also heard that there is a hesitancy to collect this data. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) has identified that the sector lacks disaggregated data on the direct impact of the pandemic on women-serving-women-led organizations and that this data is needed to ensure that recovery efforts are "responding to, rather than deepening, existing inequalities" (Abji, Major & Khemraj, 2021). Ethical and respectful disaggregated data collection is key to addressing institutional racism and inertia.

LEARNING FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

The Anti-Racism Working Group was formed to address racism in the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector in England and Wales. To center anti-racism in their work, the Working Group identified the need to: "develop a best practice approach to monitoring and reporting on diversity, lived experience and protected characteristics within our organisation, and develop targets to tackle any issues identified."

Policies and Practices

Institutions committed to anti-racism and anti-oppression must design policies, practices, and processes that are explicitly responsive to inequitable structures. The OHRC offers guidance, sample language and templates for developing human rights and anti-discrimination policies. Human rights and anti-discrimination policies promote compliance with the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and should contain clear complaint procedures. OAITH's Intersectional Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Policy goes beyond legal compliance to establish organization values and the "importance of critically examining and engaging in discussions about racism, oppression, violence and power structures creating issues of inequity, inaccessibility and limits to participation for marginalized communities." Within the GBV sector ARAO policy recognizes the relationship between family violence and intimate-partner violence, and state-sanctioned violence against Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities.

In our roundtable discussion with OAITH member organizations, we heard that it is necessary to go beyond policy to bring focus on organizational practices. This commitment to practice involves considering how racism and oppression create barriers to access within shelters and programming. We heard that an expanded understanding of harm reduction includes a willingness to shift practice and protocols to take into consideration the impact of lived experiences of racism. This expanded understanding could apply to meal planning, admissions criteria, eviction policies, risk assessments, and engagement with outside agencies.

SPOTLIGHT

Women's Habitat (Etobicoke, ON)

"We formed an ARAO Committee, developed an ARAO policy and committed to collectively reviewing all of our policies and protocols against an ARAO matrix. The matrix is organized around our guiding anti-racism and anti-oppression principles and asks us to think through how our policies live up to these principles and identify where they fall short. This takes time. And has been challenging for all of us. But through this process our staff and our clients came to believe that we are committed to this work. Within this sector we sometimes hold on to the idea that we don't have any power. Our approach to ARAO work promotes equitable distribution and exercise of power. Through our policy we identify ARAO responsibilities for all members of our organization including management, direct and non-direct service employees, and clients and their dependents. We see it as vital to our ARAO work that client voices are included in program development and enhancement."

In this passage, we see how integral process is to anti-racism and anti-oppression work. Women's Habitat did not simply create a policy, they also worked to embed the principles of that policy throughout the institution. In engaging in institutional review practices, Women's Habitat also strengthened their interpersonal practices and individual staff members' understandings of what anti-racism entails in practice. Additionally, by identifying institutional responsibilities throughout the organization, Women's Habitat helped make visible the agency and accountability of various members of the organization and highlight the relevance of anti-racism and anti-oppression work throughout the organization.

Organizational Culture and Decision-Making Processes

Organizations and sectors have their own internal cultures which are built around the dominant norm, and risk alienating those that fall outside of these norms. Identifying and challenging these norms requires an awareness of how racism functions and a willingness to engage in challenging and uncomfortable conversations to develop more equitable practices and internal culture. Training sessions should make explicit reference to racism and center the experiences and voices of those most impacted by structural racism. Examining organizational culture in the interest of advancing anti-racism and anti-oppression involves critically assessing how institutional norms favour particular modes of interaction and reinforce exclusions. While not every institutional norm is necessarily exclusionary, institutions should also consider what processes are in place for members of marginalized groups to learn or challenge these norms. What are the opportunities for feedback and input? What sort of mentorship is in place? How do various members of the organization get to shape practices and participate in decisions?

In looking to shift organizational culture and build anti-racism and anti-oppression into decision-making processes it is crucial that this work not be dropped on the shoulders of Black, Indigenous, and racialized staff and community members. The offloading of anti-racism work and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) responsibilities onto racialized staff has been identified as a form of "emotional tax" or "identity/diversity tax." Emotional/Identity/Diversity Tax is used to describe the experience of many racialized workers in Canada who report being treated differently, subject to additional responsibilities, and constantly on guard to protect themselves against discrimination and bias. Recent studies of Canadian workplaces report that Black, Indigenous, and racialized professionals are doubly burdened by exclusionary workplace practices and tokenistic diversity strategies (Catalyst, 2019; Henry et al., 2017). As Rita Dhamoon (2020) has articulated, racism is a workload issue that is rarely recognized

and compensated. Thus, while addressing racism in organizational culture and decision-making processes necessarily involves prioritizing the voices of Black, Indigenous, and racialized members of the organization, asking these members to participate in ARAO consultations and committee work without providing accompanying compensation or racial trauma supports risks subjecting these members to an emotional/diversity tax. Organizational leadership and non-racialized members of the workplace can also take-on the labour of gathering anti-racism and anti-oppression materials that center Black, Indigenous, and racialized voices within the GBV sector (see for example: the Violence Against Women Learning Network Forum on Looking Within: Anti-Black Racism and the Gender-Based Violence Sector in Canada).

Putting it into action:

▶ **Collect data** on the social demographics of both your organizational staff and the communities you serve in order to identify representational gaps, racial disparities, and disproportionalities. Engage with members in your organization and your community about the need for data collection, challenges to collecting this data, and how privacy will be maintained. Provide support to staff on how to ask data related questions respectfully.

  ▷ *Prompt: What demographic data do you currently collect and what systems do you use to collect it? What information would assist you in developing more responsive programming and removing barriers to access?*

▶ **Policy development**. Addressing racism and oppression at an institutional level involves ensuring that an anti-discrimination policy is in place, with an accessible complaints system. It further involves specific commitments and initiatives that attend to racism.

  ▷ *Prompt: What policies do you currently have in place and what frameworks do they use (e.g., human rights, anti-discrimination, equity, diversity, inclusion, ARAO)? Do staff and clients know what to do when they experience racial discrimination within your organization?*

▶ **Review of practices and protocols**. In order to ensure that anti-racism and anti-oppression is embedded within the practices and norms of an organization, it is necessary to apply scrutiny to existing protocols and ways of doing things to examine if these create racial inequities.

  ▷ *Prompt: Do you examine your practices and protocols in relation to your anti-racism and anti-oppression commitments? Do you solicit input from staff and clients around racial equity?*

▶ **Training and engagement strategies**. In order to build a racially equitable organization, it is necessary to openly discuss racism and intersecting oppressions in meetings and in trainings.

  ▷ *Prompt: Do you hold dedicated training sessions or invite speakers on issues of racism, oppression, and colonialism? Do you create and maintain spaces where Black, Indigenous, and racialized members of your organization can discuss racial justice and lived experiences?*

(See Appendix C - Intersectional Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Institutional Impact Assessment and Planning Tool)

Community

"

You have to act as if it were possible to radically change the world. And you have to do it all the time.

"

Angela Davis, Black American activist, scholar, and abolitionist

Sphere of Influence: Community

As organizations committed to ending all forms of gender-based violence and an Ontario that is safe, equitable, and just for all women, girls, and gender-diverse communities, **we must attend to the structural inequalities within our communities** (OAITH Vision and Mission). Anti-racism and anti-oppression are inextricable from this commitment because gender identity is always experienced in the complex intersections of other identities. So long as there is racism and colonialism, there will be racialized gendered violence and colonial gendered violence. Supporting prevention of violence in communities that are most impacted by racism and colonialism is bound up in preventing gender-based violence more broadly.

Practicing anti-racism and anti-oppression in the community sphere first requires learning about how colonialism and racism have shaped and continue to shape our communities. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to anti-racism and anti-oppression at the community level for GBV shelters and organizations across Ontario—as our communities across Ontario are diverse and have specific local histories and socio-political dynamics.

This located understanding of structural violence in our communities instructs how we can then cultivate relationships in our communities. Building relationships enables a deepening of our understanding of how we can strategically utilize our own power and privilege in support of the most adversely impacted communities.

Most Adversely Impacted Communities

Building on that knowledge of local histories, we must tune in to what is happening in our local city/town and region and be attentive to what communities are marginalized and facing everyday violence, inequity, and lack of access to justice. To do so, we must identify the communities who

are most adversely impacted by systemic racism, including Indigenous and Black communities (Ontario Anti-Racism Act, 2017). We must ask ourselves: What existing struggles for justice exist in my local area, and how do I stand in solidarity with them? What material resources, social and political capital, relationships, and influence do I hold, and how can these resources be utilized to support and uplift these struggles?

In locating most adversely impacted communities, we should consider how structural violence and inequity manifests in our community, including through:

➡ Ableism and sanism

➡ Anti-Asian racism

➡ Anti-Black racism

➡ Anti-Indigenous racism

➡ Antisemitism

➡ Criminalization of drug use and drug users

➡ Homophobia and heteronormativity

➡ Islamophobia

➡ Poverty

➡ Sex work criminalization

➡ Structural discrimination and exploitation of migrants

➡ Transmisogyny and transphobia

These systems of structural oppression are always already deeply tied to the work of dismantling gender-based violence as these systems are inextricable from women, girls, and gender diverse communities who experience gender-based violence.

Supporting the communities who are most impacted by violence and most marginalized requires us to re-examine our assumptions about how abuse is experienced. Leaders in the GBV sector have noted that: "a cisgender heteronormative victim-

perpetrator archetype impacts services, research, funding, and legislation to address gendered violence in our society" (Ham, Owusu-Akyeeah, and Byard Peek, 2022: 3). In our facilitated roundtable, one leader in the GBV sector noted that to apply intersectionality means identifying "how people experience abuse is different so how we intervene should be different." This requires us to consider questions that destabilize our assumptions, such as: How do we define abuse? How do we define who is a couple? Who does that exclude? Intersectional anti-racism and anti-oppression within this sector includes consideration of how narrow standards and definitions exclude particular community members from accessing GBV support, such as trans and gender diverse people experiencing abuse.

LEARNING FROM COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

Creating Authentic Spaces: A Gender Identity and Gender Expression Toolkit

According to a national survey conducted by Trans PULSE Canada in 2019, 3 in 5 trans women have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 16. The Western University VAW Learning network analysed the Trans PULSE survey to identify that gender biases and cisnormativity create barriers for trans women to access gender-based violence support services. These barriers can be compounded with racism, ableism, and colonialism. GBV service providers can better serve trans women by: learning about gender biases and transmisogyny; developing policies and protocols to prevent violence and discrimination against trans women, creating spaces and programs for trans women, and fostering partnerships and organizations serving trans women (VAW Learning Network).

The 519, an agency that provides services and advocacy for the LGBTQ2S community in Toronto, has developed the Creating Authentic Spaces: A Gender Identity and Gender Expression Toolkit that is a practical resource for individuals, organizations, and front-line service providers focusing on inclusive and affirming practices around gender identity and expression. The toolkit provides constructive steps on implementing anti-discrimination practices around gender identity and expression. The toolkit provides step-by-step guides including creating trans-positive washrooms and change rooms, addressing issues around name and pronoun changes, supporting an employee who is transitioning, and supporting equal access to services and fair hiring practices.

Cultivating Relationships and Solidarity

With an informed understanding of our local communities, we can then begin to cultivate relationships and build towards taking action, forming collaborations and partnerships, and redistributing resources and power in your community. Cultivating relationships in our communities with those most impacted by structural racism and inequity allows us to be led by those who are the experts of their own needs. This requires going beyond claiming "allyship" like a badge of honour without backing this up with action. Meaningful relationships can help us to become "co-resistors" in the struggles against systemic racism and oppression. The Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network explains that "Being a co-resistor is about standing together, as an ensemble, in resistance against oppressive forces and requires constant learning. It is combining theory and practice by establishing relationships and being deeply involved

within a community that informs how one listens critically, understands an issue and influences the way they go about disrupting oppressive institutions and systemic systems" ([Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network,](#) 2019). Co-resistance is possible when we understand that our struggles are bound up together, and we share a mutual interest in dismantling systems and structures that maintain inequity and violence.

Identifying and Disrupting Power Imbalances in the Sector

Structural inequalities can be perpetuated in the GBV sector through differentiated access to funding and policy-making spaces. Disrupting power imbalances in the sector looks like: sharing access to resources and power with Black-, Indigenous-, and women-of-colour-led organizations; amplifying the voices of Black, Indigenous, racialized, and other minority communities in advocacy spaces, and developing strategic partnerships and forums where Black, Indigenous, and racialized women are represented ([Anti-Racism Working Group](#)); and creating systems that support Black, Indigenous, and racialized women in leading the development of ways of transforming structural inequity and serving most adversely impacted communities.

Funding Inequality

We can take steps to dismantle funding inequality in our sector and in our communities by abstaining from competing with organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities. One roundtable participant shared that her organization supported the First Nation in her community in a grant application for funding to support the First Nation in identifying unmarked residential school graves. In this instance, her organization recognized that rather than initiate their own project and access funding through their organization, the funding is better funnelled directly into the control of the First Nation. The Anti-Racism Working Group's Call to Action for the VAWG Sector on Anti-Racism lays out guidance for ending funding inequality. In addition to not competing for funds, the Working Group asserts that "We should not subsume 'by and for' Black and minoritized women's services into our organisation, and should not bid for public contracts, projects or services which support Black and minoritized women alone, unless to support a 'by and for' service as part of a partnership" ([Anti-Racism Working Group](#)). Furthermore, when we draw on resources and expertise from Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, we must value and financially compensate this work.

CALLS FOR SOLIDARITY IN THE SECTOR

We acknowledge structural imbalances in the GBV sector in Ontario, wherein Indigenous shelters are funded separate and apart from mainstream shelters, with disparate access to resources. A representative from the Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario (ASOO) noted that ASOO offers membership to all VAW-GBV shelters in Ontario, and approximately 50% of OAITH members are also ASOO members. Purchasing a membership in ASOO is a small way to provide financial support to ASOO, and also has the advantage of improving your own practices with Indigenous clients, as the membership grants you access to ASOO training and learning opportunities.

Putting it into action:

▶ **Learn** about your community's history of colonization and settlement and the ways in which the legacy of colonial theft of land has impacted Indigenous nations in your area.

  ▷ *Prompt: Which Indigenous nation(s) does this land belong to? How do the colonial theft of the land and legacies of genocide impact those nations?*

  ▷ *Prompt: How can I build relationships with the Indigenous nation(s) in my area? What calls for reconciliation and decolonization are coming from these Indigenous nations? How can I support these calls?*

▶ **Learn** about your community's Black, racialized, and migrant populations.

  ▷ *Prompt: Who is in your community and how are these communities structurally located in relation to socio-political power?*

▶ **Cultivate relationships in your community** with organizations already working towards supporting most adversely impacted communities and working towards transformative justice.

  ▷ *Prompt: What are the existing service and grassroots organizations in my community that serve Black, Indigenous, racialized, and marginalized communities? How can I begin to show up for that work?*

▶ **Locate opportunities** to provide support to organizations in your community that are led by Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities.

  ▷ *Prompt: What resources are at my disposal to support the communities most impacted by structural inequity and injustice? What can I do to bolster that work?*

▶ **Advocate** to funders and government that policymaking be inclusive of most adversely impacted communities, including Black and Indigenous folks. Advocate for more than tokenistic representation—inclusion should be accompanied with the power of communities to shape strategies and policies.

  ▷ *Prompt: Who is not represented in decision-making spaces? What can I do to put more decision-making power in the hands of those who are most adversely impacted by violence and inequity in my community?*

▶ **Apply for membership with ASOO** to support their work and access training resources that are already existing to support Indigenous clients.

SPOTLIGHT:

Anova (London, ON)

"We have a massive Muslim population in London. Arabic is second most common language and about half of our housing units are taken up by Muslim immigrants. Islamophobia is a major issue in London, which was made very clear in June 2021 when a white man targeted and killed a Muslim family with his truck. The city has a lot of work to do to in integrating anti-Islamophobia to keep the Muslim community safe. We work with the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration (MRCSSI) of London in developing practices for working with Muslim women. With MRCSSI, we've developed a collaborative approach to working with the Muslim community that came out of sessions where we studied case files and case examples to establish best practices for serving Muslim clients. MRCSSI led this, and we were along for the ride to take these insights and apply them in Anova's work. Supporting Muslim families is a part of this; we've learned that we must replace the individualistic approach that we typically take in serving clients and draw on the collectivist culture that Arabic-speaking families walk through. This has prompted our organization as a whole to think about ways that our work can be informed by non-Western approaches and worldviews."

In this passage, we can see that Anova identified that the Muslim community is being harmed by Islamophobia and that the organization should take steps to better serve their Muslim clients to integrate anti-Islamophobia into their practices. To do so, there is a recognition that organizations supporting the Muslim community already exist, and in this case, are better positioned to identify the best practices for an anti-Islamophobic approach to GBV. Anova's collaboration with MRCSSI is an example of how an organization can support work that is already happening to support impacted communities, in a way that is mutually beneficial and does not detract resources from the community or assumes itself as an authority on the experience of Muslim women, girls, and families.

Concluding Thoughts

Just as we draw on the experience and expertise of other sectors and jurisdictions in constructing this framework, it is our hope that the exploration of anti-racism and anti-oppression within the spheres of influence offered here will be instructive for cross-sectoral anti-racism work. We offer this framework as a means to build personal and institutional accountability and to further community solidarity work. We revisit and restate our guiding principles to establish that this work has no conclusion or end point.

01   **Intentional and Proactive:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression requires ongoing actions.

02   **Accountability:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression requires a willingness to be held accountable for our actions and inactions.

03   **Ongoing Assessment:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression entails regularly measuring, assessing, and understanding inequitable racial structures.

04   **Impact-focused:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression requires recognizing and supporting those groups that are most adversely impacted by systemic racism.

05   **Structurally-integrated:** Anti-racism and anti-oppression involves ending all forms of gender-based, racial and colonial violence and oppression.

06   **Intersectional:** Strategies and tactics to address systemic racism barriers must take into consideration the way racism interacts with and is reinforced by other histories and structures of oppression.

Sourced Glossary for Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Framework

OAITH also maintains and updates an Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression glossary that can be found here.

Ableism is "the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability. Like racism and sexism, ableism classifies entire groups of people as 'less than,' and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of people with disabilities" (Eisenmenger, 2019).

Aboriginal refers to Inuit, Métis, and First Nations peoples. The Canadian constitution recognizes Aboriginal peoples as an umbrella term to refer to these distinct Indigenous groups. While the Canadian government introduced this term into official language as a replacement for 'Indian' and 'Native,' and it remains in usage in Canadian society and law, this term's Latin origins roughly translate to "not original". As an umbrella term, it risks homogenizing nations and peoples that have diverse and distinct cultures, languages, histories, traditions, and laws (Animikii, 2020). The preferred international terminology to refer to peoples whose origins pre-date colonization and/or settler society is 'Indigenous' (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, n.d.).

Anti-Asian racism refers to "historical and ongoing discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by peoples of Asian descent, based on others' assumptions about their ethnicity and nationality. Peoples of Asian descent are subjected to specific overt and subtle racist tropes and stereotypes at individual and systemic levels, which lead to their ongoing economic, political, and cultural marginalization, disadvantage, violence, and unequal treatment. This includes perceptions of being a 'Yellow Peril,' a 'Perpetual Foreigner,' a 'Model Minority,' 'exotic,' or 'mystic.' These stereotypes are rooted in Canada's long history of racist and exclusionary laws, and often mask racism faced by peoples of Asian descent, while erasing their historical contributions to building Canada" (Government of Canada, 2019).

Anti-Black racism "is prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices, to the extent that anti-Black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger White society. Anti-Black racism is manifest in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of [Black] Canadians, which includes unequal opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Anti-Indigenous racism "is the ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by Indigenous Peoples within Canada. It includes ideas and practices that establish, maintain, and perpetuate power imbalances, systemic barriers, and inequitable outcomes that stem from the legacy of colonial policies and practices in Canada. Systemic anti-Indigenous racism is evident in discriminatory federal policies such as the Indian Act and the residential school system. It is also manifest in the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in provincial criminal justice and child welfare systems, as well as inequitable outcomes in education, well-being, and health. Individual lived experiences of anti-Indigenous racism can be seen in the rise in acts of hostility and violence directed at Indigenous people" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Sourced Glossary

Anti-Oppression is a framework that recognizes that oppression exists in society and aims to eradicate oppression by examining and challenging power dynamics while empowering those who experience oppression (The Anti-Violence Project, n.d.). Anti-Oppression starts at the level of the individual through self-education and self-awareness, and extends to the interpersonal, institutional, and community.

Anti-Racism is a process that acknowledges the existence of systemic racism and, through policies and practices, seeks to actively identify, challenge, and end systemic racism in all its various forms. According to Colour of Poverty-Colour of Change, "To be effective, the Anti-Racism Strategies must be results-oriented and must produce long term, sustainable change that will withstand the test of time, and any change in political power" (Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change, 2019).

Antisemitism is the "hatred of Jews or prejudice against them as an ethnic, religious, or racial group. Antisemitism can take many forms and includes negative stereotypes or discrimination against individual Jews, acts of desecration of synagogues or Jewish cemeteries, and organized attacks by mobs, police, or military against Jewish communities. The "new antisemitism," a controversial concept that emerged in the 1990s, holds that opposition to Zionism, the State of Israel, or even Israeli policy, is tantamount to demonization of the Jews. Many observers emphasize, however, that not only is this an inaccurate use of the term "antisemitism," but it dilutes its meaning" (Kamel, 2022).

BIPOC is an acronym referring to Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. It is used to differentiate among racialized people and draws attention to those identified within the Ontario Anti-Racism Act (2017) as being "most adversely impacted by systemic racism, including Indigenous and Black communities." The acronym is also at times presented as IBPOC to prioritize the experiences of Indigenous communities and draw attention to Truth and Reconciliation commitments. While the term emerged from an intention to signal that Black and Indigenous communities experience particular impacts of racism and white supremacy, it has been critiqued for providing another way of subsuming all non-white people into one group, losing the nuance of its original intention (Paradkar, 2021).

Carceral feminism "describes an approach that sees increased policing, prosecution, and imprisonment as the primary solution to violence against women. This stance does not acknowledge that police are often purveyors of violence and that prisons are always sites of violence. Carceral feminism ignores the ways in which race, class, gender identity, and immigration status leave certain women more vulnerable to violence and that greater criminalization often places these same women at risk of state violence" (Law, 2014). Further, carceral feminism inadvertently or actively "discourages alternative responses to gender and sexual violence, including community accountability and transformative justice" (Canessa, 2022).

Cis/cisgender refers to a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth (the 519 Glossary of Terms).

Cisnormativity "refers to the commonplace assumption that all people are cisgender and that everyone accepts this as "the norm." The term cisnormativity is used to describe systemic prejudice against trans people. This form of systemic prejudice may go unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible" (the 519 Glossary of Terms).

Sourced Glossary

Cissexism refers to "a system of oppression that considers cis people to be superior to trans people. It includes harmful beliefs that it is "normal" to be cis and "abnormal" to be trans. Examples include scrutinizing the genders of trans people more than those of cis people or defining beauty based on how cis people look" (the 519 Glossary of Terms).

Classism is "the institutional, cultural and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic class; and an economic system that creates excessive inequality and causes basic human needs to go unmet;" where class refers to relative status based on income, wealth, education, occupational status, and/or power (National Conference for Community and Justice, n.d.).

Colonialism is the historical practice of European expansion into territories already inhabited by Indigenous peoples for the purposes of acquiring new lands and resources. This expansion is rooted in the violent suppression of Indigenous peoples' governance, legal, social, and cultural structures. Colonialism attempts to force Indigenous peoples to accept and integrate into institutions that are designed to force them to conform with the structures of the colonial state. "Colonialism remains an ongoing process, shaping both the structure and the quality of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2016).

Criminalization is "to make an activity illegal or to treat someone as criminal" and refers to the sustained practices of over-policing and surveillance on communities that are negatively stereotyped, such as Black communities, people experiencing poverty and/or homelessness, sex workers, and drug users. Criminalization produces long-term harms from over-policing, "such as harassment, expulsion from school, use of force, asset forfeiture, questionable searches and seizures, fines, detention, and incarceration" (YWCA, 2017).

Cultural genocide refers to "the attempted destruction of a group's culture. Cultural genocide may involve such acts as language bans, a prohibition on creative acts of expression, educational reform to promote assimilation, or a physical attack on cultural institutions such as libraries, monuments, or the land" (Yellowhead Institute, 2019).

Decolonization is the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (Tuck and Yang, 2012). It involves a dismantling of settler colonial structures and relationships. In a settler colonial context, decolonization is inherently unsettling, and not reducible to civil rights and social justice. Decolonization "is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity" (Tuck and Yang 2012: 35), that is, to Indigenous self-determination and self-governance. For non-Indigenous people, supporting decolonization "can require us to locate ourselves within the context of colonization in complicated ways, often as simultaneously oppressed and complicit" (Walia 2012).

Discrimination refers to "Treating someone unfairly by either imposing a burden on them, or denying them a privilege, benefit or opportunity enjoyed by others, because of their race, citizenship, family status, disability, sex or other personal characteristics" (Government of Canada, 2019).

Sourced Glossary

Equality refers to "the practice of ensuring equal treatment to all people, without consideration of individual and group diversities" (the 519 Glossary).

Equity refers to "The practice of ensuring fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people, with consideration of individual and group diversities. Access to services, supports and opportunities and attaining economic, political, and social fairness cannot be achieved by treating individuals in exactly the same way. Equity honours and accommodates the specific needs of individuals/ groups" (the 519 Glossary).

Equity-seeking groups are "communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social, and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation" (Canada Council for the Arts, n.d.).

Ethnic group refers to "a person's ethnic or cultural origins. Ethnic groups have a common identity, heritage, ancestry, or historical past, often with identifiable cultural, linguistic, and/or religious characteristics" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Eurocentrism is a worldview that "Presupposes the supremacy of Western civilization, specifically Europe and Europeans, in world culture. Eurocentrism centres history according to European and Western perceptions and experiences" (Canadian Race Relations Foundation).

Gender "can refer to the individual and/or social experience of being a man, a woman, or neither. Social norms, expectations and roles related to gender vary across time, space, culture, and individuals" (the 519 Glossary).

Genderqueer/Non-binary refers to "individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as 'feminine men' or 'masculine women' or as androgynous, outside of the categories 'boy/man' and 'girl/woman.'" They may also see their gender as fluid and non-fixed from day to day. People who are non-binary or genderqueer may or may not identify as trans (the 519 Glossary).

Gender Binary refers to "A social system whereby people are thought to have either one of two genders: "man" or "woman." These genders are expected to correspond to birth sex: male or female. In the gender binary system, there is no room for living between genders or for transcending the gender binary. The gender binary system is rigid and restrictive for many people whose sex assigned at birth does not match up with their gender, or whose gender is fluid and not fixed" (the 519 Glossary).

Gender Expression refers to "how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language, and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender. All people, regardless of their gender identity, have a gender expression and they may express it in any number of ways" (the 519 Glossary).

Sourced Glossary

Heteronormativity refers to "the commonplace assumption that all people are heterosexual and that everyone accepts this as 'the norm.' The term heteronormativity is used to describe prejudice against people that are not heterosexual and is less overt or direct and more widespread or systemic in society, organizations, and institutions. This form of systemic prejudice may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible" (the 519 Glossary).

Heterosexism relates to social structures and practices that serve to elevate and enforce heterosexuality while subordinating or suppressing other sexual orientations. It includes "the assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior and preferable. The result is discrimination against bisexual, lesbian and gay people that is less overt, and which may be unintentional and unrecognized by the person or organization responsible" (the 519 Glossary).

Homophobia is "negative attitudes, feelings, or irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of gay, lesbian, or bisexual people and communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as 'homosexual.' It is used to signify a hostile psychological state leading to discrimination, harassment, or violence against gay, lesbian, or people" (the 519 Glossary).

Indigenous refers to communities, peoples, and nations that "are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems" (United Nations, 2016).

Intersectionality "is based on two key ideas. First, viewing a problem through an intersectional lens reveals the nature of discrimination that flows from the intersection of multiple identities. When oppressions based on two or more identity categories intersect, a new form of oppression is created that is different from the constituent forms of oppression added together. [. . .] The second idea connects individual and group experiences of disadvantage based on intersecting identities to broader systems of power and privilege. In doing so, intersectionality recasts identity categories not as objective descriptors of an individual's innate characteristics, but as socially constructed categories that operate as vectors for privilege and vulnerability within our social, cultural, political, economic and legal power structures" (Ajele and McGill, 2020).

Islamophobia is "Islamophobia is racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear, or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic, and societal level" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Oppression refers to a pattern of persistent and systematic disadvantage imposed on large groups of people, in many domains of social life, including employment, social status, treatment by the legal system, and vulnerability to violence. Oppression generally entails "the domination of subordinate groups in society by powerful (politically, economically, socially, and culturally) groups. It entails the various ways that this domination occurs, including how structural arrangements favour the dominant over subordinate group" (Mullaly, 2002 in LGBTQ2S Toolkit, n.d.).

Sourced Glossary

Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) refers to "the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems" (Critical Resistance, n.d.). A key feature of the PIC includes mass incarceration, which has disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous and racialized communities and other marginalized groups, including poor people, queer people and disabled people (Tufts University Prison Divestment).

Race is "a term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits (phenotypes) such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has created (i.e., "socially constructed"), with significant consequences for people's lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural or religious groupings" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Racial equity "is the systemic fair treatment of all people. It results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. It contrasts with formal equality where people are treated the same without regard for racial differences. Racial equity is a process (such as meaningfully engaging with Indigenous, Black, and racialized clients regarding policies, directives, practices and procedures that affect them) and an outcome (such as equitable treatment of Indigenous, Black, and racialized clients in a program or service)" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Racial Justice is "a vision and transformation of society to eliminate racial hierarchies and advance collective liberation, where Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color, in particular, have the dignity, resources, power, and self- determination to fully thrive" (Sen and Keleher, 2021).

Racialization is "a process of delineating group boundaries (races) and allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics. In this process, societies construct races as 'real,' different, and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political, and social life" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Racialized (person or group) "can have racial meanings attributed to them in ways that negatively impact their social, political, and economic life. This includes but is not necessarily limited to people classified as "visible minorities" under the Canadian census and may include people impacted by antisemitism and Islamophobia" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Racism refers to "the body of ideas and practices that establishes, maintains, and perpetuates such [race-based] categories of difference, sustained through multiple, varied, and contextually specific social, political, and economic construction" (Bakan and Dua 2014). In other words, racism is "ideas or practices that establish, maintain or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Sourced Glossary

Sanism is "a systematized discrimination, antagonism, or exclusion directed against neurodivergent people based on the belief that neurotypical cognition is superior" and stems from the assumption that there is one 'right,' 'normal,' or 'healthy' way for a brain to be configured and to function, and if a person's brain is configured and functions differently from the dominant standard, there is something 'wrong' or 'abnormal'" (Simmons University, 2021).

Settler colonialism is a structure of processes (Simpson 2017)—including the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands, physical and cultural genocide, assimilation, and the subordination and/or destruction of Indigenous political and legal systems—that enable the settlement and establishment of a foreign colonial nation state, which is populated by non-Indigenous people (Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 1999).

Systemic racism "consists of organizational culture, policies, directives, practices, or procedures that exclude, displace, or marginalize some racialized groups or create unfair barriers for them to access valuable benefits and opportunities. This is often the result of institutional biases in organizational culture, policies, directives, practices, and procedures that may appear neutral but have the effect of privileging some groups and disadvantaging others" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, 2018).

Trans or Transgender is "an umbrella term referring to people whose gender identities differ from the sex they were assigned at birth. 'Trans' can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, non-binary or gender non-conforming (gender variant or genderqueer)" (the 519 Glossary).

Transmisogyny refers to "negative attitudes, expressed through cultural hate, individual and state violence, and discrimination directed toward trans women and trans and gender non-conforming people on the feminine end of the gender spectrum" (the 519 Glossary).

Transphobia refers to "Negative attitudes and feelings and the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people, or those perceived to be trans" (the 519 Glossary).

Two Spirit "describes gender identity and expression as fluid and beyond strictly male or female. Two- Spirit tends to be a pan-Indigenous term, but not all [Indigenous] gender non-conforming individuals identify as Two-Spirit" (Yellowhead Institute, 2019). Two Spirit is an "umbrella term encompassing gender and sexual diversity in Indigenous communities. Two Spirit people often serve integral and important roles in their communities, such as leaders and healers. There are many understandings of the term Two Spirit – and this English term does not resonate for everyone. Two Spirit is a cultural term reserved for those who identify as Indigenous" (the 519 Glossary).

Sourced Glossary

White Privilege refers to "the inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice. This concept does not imply that a white person has not worked for their accomplishments but rather, that they have not faced barriers encountered by others" (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, n.d.).

White Supremacy refers to "a comprehensive condition whereby the interests and perceptions of white subjects are continually placed centre stage and assumed as 'normal'" (Gilbourn, 2006). bell hooks (2000) maintains that "there could be no real sisterhood between white women and women of color if white women [are] not able to divest of white supremacy."

Xenophobia refers to "any attitude, behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that immigrants are inferior to the dominant group of people. Xenophobia is reflected in interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels oppression and is a function of White supremacy" (Cokorinos, 2007).

Generating Guidelines for Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Discussions

The Taking Action in Our Spheres of Influence Framework suggests creating shared guidelines and expectations that anticipate difficult moments in anti-racism and anti-oppression discussions. Establishing equitable spaces requires intentionality and preparation. During scheduled discussions and team meetings, build-in opportunities to consider anti-racism and anti-oppression issues and concerns. Being prepared for anti-racism and anti-oppression discussions involves creating shared guidelines and expectations that anticipate difficult moments and the possibility of defensiveness, microaggressions, and resistance. Thinking through how to handle these moments is a **process** which should be approached collectively, instead of a set of rules that can be imposed. Recognize that the guidelines you create are aspirational and can still fall short but will hopefully provide ongoing guidance for the group to return to as discussions become difficult.

1.
Collectively Generate Guidelines

2.
Prioritize Voices with Lived Experience of Racism

3.
Take time to clarify, expand and unpack

4.
Return to these guidelines when the going gets tough

Generating Guidelines

1. Collectively Generate Guidelines

First, invite everyone present to offer a guideline that they would like to see observed in this discussion.

Examples of possible guidelines:

- Commit to empathetic engagement – listen to understand, not to rebut.
- Make room for clumsiness and mistakes.
- Participate with generosity and curiosity.

2. Prioritize Voices with Lived Experience of Racism

Second, prioritize the voices and experiences of those most adversely impacted by racism and intersecting inequitable power structures. Encourage the group to recognize their own positionality/identity with respect to inequitable power structures. Make space for expressions of affect, including feelings of hurt, frustration, and upset, in recognition that for Black, Indigenous, and racialized group members these conversations are not purely theoretical and instead can surface racial trauma.

Generating Guidelines

3.

Take time to clarify, expand and unpack

Third, take time to clarify, expand, and unpack the guidelines offered by the group. In recognition that some of the most commonly relied upon guidelines often don't serve us in the ways we expect them to, it is worth collectively discussing whether or not the guidelines offered truly help to build equitable and anti-racist spaces.

For example:

▶ "Agree to disagree" can be an exercise of privilege when members of a dominant group use this option to avoid conversations that make them feel uncomfortable.

▶ "Don't take things personally" may entail that those affected by experiences of oppression are told to hide their feelings (e.g., upset, anger, frustration, sadness) so as not to make others uncomfortable.

4.

Return to these guidelines when the going gets tough
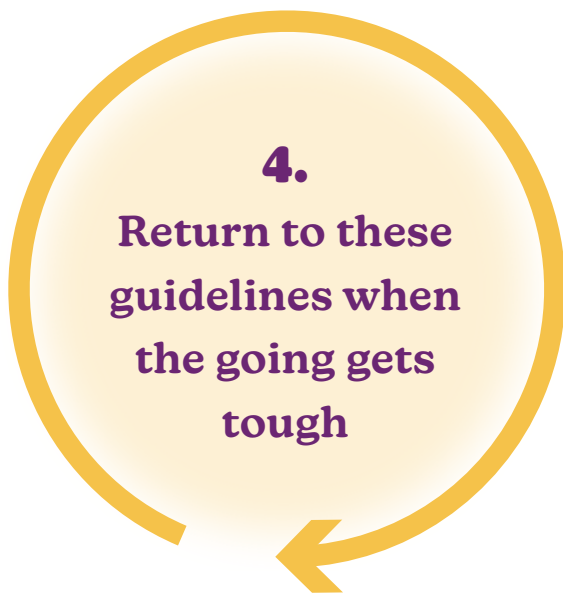
Finally, relinquish the expectation that these conversations will be easy or comfortable.

Instead, anticipate that there will be moments of disagreement and discomfort, and be prepared to return to these guidelines to re-establish what the group aspires towards collectively. The guidelines can be updated, modified, and reviewed between meetings, and should be revisited periodically to establish an ongoing commitment to equitable anti-racist space.

Intersectional Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Institutional Impact Assessment and Planning Tool

This institutional impact assessment and planning tool is intended support the **Taking Action in Our Spheres of Influence Framework** to assist GBV organizations to examine current institutional practices with respect to anti-racism and anti-oppression (ARAO), articulate challenges and considerations in engaging in institutional ARAO work, and enable the integration of ARAO into strategic institutional planning.

Area of Focus	Rationale	Current Status	Considerations	Planning
Demographic Data	The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has identified that data collection on demographic and diversity-related information can be critical to assessing the extent to which an organization is meeting its equity objectives (read more here: Count Me In). Additionally, in 2018 the Ontario's Anti-Racism Data Standards were established to help identify and monitor systemic racism and racial disparities within the public sector.	Does your organization currently collect demographic data? • *Who is captured in the data (e.g., staff, volunteers, clients, program recipients, board members)?* • *What type of data is captured (e.g., Indigenous identity, race, religion, ethnic origin, gender, and ability)?* • *How does this data inform institutional planning and advocacy (e.g., programming, communications, training)?*	*Have you engaged board members, staff, volunteers, and community members in consultations and discussions around the value of demographic data?* *Have you identified opportunities to collect data in existing processes and systems (e.g., intake forms, program reports)?* *Have you provided opportunities for staff and community members to voice concerns and identified strategies to work through resistance?* *Have you communicated the purpose of data collection and how the information will be used, protected, and analysed?*	Identify: • *Provincial resources and best practices.* • *Demographic benchmarks (a point of reference, or standard, against which things can be compared, assessed, or measured) that are reflective of the communities you serve and the broader sector.* • *Potential impacts of data on programming and survivor advocacy work.*

Impact Assessment

Area of Focus	Rationale	Current Status	Considerations	Planning
Policies, Processes & Practices	Institutions committed to anti-racism and anti-oppression must design policies, practices, and processes that are explicitly responsive to inequitable structures. The OHRC offers guidance, sample language, and templates for developing human rights and anti-discrimination policies (see OHRC Policy Primer). Human rights and anti-discrimination policies promote compliance with the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and should contain clear complaint procedures.	Does your organization currently have policies and processes in place that address racism? • *Is there a human rights and anti-discrimination policy in place with a clear complaint procedure?* • *Have you articulated your organization's commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression in policy statements and community communications?* • *Have you created space in meetings and organizational practices to build in ARAO processes?*	*Are we meeting our obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code to provide employment and services that are free from individual and systemic discrimination?* *Have you moved beyond legal compliance to critically examine how structural racism, oppression, colonialism, and violence impact your organizational practices?* *Have you sought input from those with lived experiences of racism to examine biases and barriers within existing shelter protocols and programming (e.g., meal planning, admissions criteria, eviction policies, risk assessments, and engagement with outside agencies)?*	Identify: • *Provincial resources and best practices.* • *Demographic benchmarks (a point of reference, or standard, against which things can be compared, assessed, or measured) that are reflective of the communities you serve and the broader sector.* • *Potential impacts of data on programming and survivor advocacy work.*

Impact Assessment

Area of Focus	Rationale	Current Status	Considerations	Planning
Decision-Making	Anti-racism and anti-oppression look beyond representational diversity to ensure that not only are racialized faces present within organizations, but in addition, voices identifying the persistence of racial inequities have the opportunity to be heard. This entails creating space for Black, Indigenous, and racialized people to meaningfully shape institutional content and participate in organizational decision-making.	Does your organization currently have a clear governance structure that includes input from clients, staff, management, and the Board? • *Do you consult with various members of the organization when designing programs and practices?* • *Are decisions made independently or collectively?* • *Do you articulate the rationale behind organizational decisions and communicate this rationale to all members of the organization?*	*Who is currently involved in making decisions for the organization?* *What consideration is given to the impact of decisions on Black, Indigenous, racialized, and underrepresented groups within the organization and the community?* *Who is invited to participate in committee work?* *Are you placing unequal burdens on Black, Indigenous, and racialized staff to address racism within the organization?*	• *Prioritize anti-racism and anti-oppression in strategic planning initiatives.* • *Create opportunities for feedback and input on organizational culture, practices, programming, and priorities (e.g., employee engagement surveys, community forums).* • *Incorporate anti-racism and anti-oppression into existing committee structures and work.* • *Consider compensation, trauma supports, and competing work demands when asking staff to take on anti-racism and anti-oppression work.*

Impact Assessment

Area of Focus	Rationale	Current Status	Considerations	Planning
Organizational Culture	Organizations and sectors have their own internal cultures which are built around dominant norms, and risk alienating those that fall outside of these norms. Identifying and challenging these norms requires an awareness of how racism functions and a willingness to engage in challenging and uncomfortable conversations to develop more equitable practices and internal culture.	Does your organization have processes in place for members of historically marginalized groups to learn or challenge institutional norms? • *What are the opportunities for feedback and input?* • *What sort of mentorship is in place?* • *Do training sessions make explicit reference to racism and center the experiences and voices of those most impacted by structural racism?* • *Are there opportunities for advancement and professional development which are extended to staff positioned throughout the organization?*	*Is there a dominant group in place within the organization? If yes, how do the social activities, institutional priorities, and communication styles reflect the dominant group?* *What opportunities are there for Black, Indigenous, racialized, and marginalized staff and community members to raise concerns with our practices?* *What efforts are made to design communications, social events, campaigns, and programming that are attentive to the demographic diversity within your organization and community?* *What supports are in place for staff and clients processing racial trauma?*	• *Identify the current demographics of your organization and examine how these demographics are reflected in institutional practices and priorities.* • *Hold training sessions that deal explicitly with racism, colonialism, and oppression.* • *Create opportunities for mentorship, professional development, and advancement that prioritize underrepresented staff.* • *Look for opportunities to show up for anti-racism and anti-oppression movements within the community.* • *Consider the role of anti-racism and anti-oppression in trauma-informed support services.*

Area of Focus	Notes
Demographic Data	
Policies, Processes & Practices	
Decision-Making	
Organizational Culture	

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