



Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

Navigating race in Canadian workplaces

A toolkit for diversity and inclusion practitioners

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How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is a product of CCDI's 2018 Spring Community of Practice events, titled 'Navigating race in the Canadian workplace'.

Community of Practice events are two-hour roundtable learning events hosted in 18 cities across Canada, open to anyone. These events generally host diversity and inclusion or human resources practitioners. The contents of this toolkit are based on information gathered at these events and through feedback we collected in a survey to participants.

Our intent with this toolkit is to provide diversity and inclusion practitioners with relevant resources to talk about race and racism in the workplace. We took into consideration the types of resources practitioners were asking for during the Community of Practice events and structured the contents of this toolkit accordingly.

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Also, the input from our Employer Partners and other Community of Practice event participants have helped us develop a toolkit that we hope is relevant, timely and practical. Thank you!

A brief history of race relations in Canada



Why does history still matter?

Many Canadians struggle with making the link between history and contemporary workplaces as related to racism and discrimination. Understanding Canadian history allows us to recognize why systemic barriers persist and remain particularly stark for some racialized groups.

In this section we provide a brief overview of a few key historical periods that have shaped race relations in Canada.

Pre-contact (prior to 1497)

Indigenous peoples lived in North America for thousands of years before European explorers arrived in the 11th century. Some Europeans eventually settled in Newfoundland, drastically changing the lives of Indigenous inhabitants.¹ Pre-contact is important to recognize, because it speaks to the rich and long history that existed before a narrative centred on a European legacy dominated our understanding of Canada as a country.

Colonization (1534 in Canada)

Colonization refers to the settlement and control over inhabited lands. Colonizing countries (namely Western European countries) set up colonies around the world for their benefit. This process of political, economic and social domination of other territories and peoples (namely in the Americas, Australia and parts of Africa and Asia) is referred to as colonization. In this framework, local people and land are exploited for the benefit of the colonizing country.

In Canada, a French explorer named Jacques Cartier undertook three voyages from France, lasting from 1534-1542. These voyages served as the symbolic start of colonization in Canada.²

A continuation of colonization followed this period. In 1884, the Indian Residential School System was implemented by the government and churches. It remains one of the darkest periods of Canadian history. The Government of Canada and the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and United churches funded and operated the schools, with the goal of assimilating Indigenous children into the system created by the settlers. It was estimated that over 150 000 Indian, Inuit and Métis children between the ages of four and sixteen attended the schools, in all Canadian provinces and territories except Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland.

¹ Government of Canada (2017, May 2). Part 2 – History of First Nations– Newcomer Relations. In *First Nations in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1307460755710/1307460872523>

² McCullough, J.J. (2017). Early History of Canada. In *The Canadian Guide*. Retrieved from <http://www.thecanadaguide.com/history/early-history/>



Indigenous children experienced significant trauma at these schools, trauma which has impacted generations of Indigenous families across Canada. In addition to being forcibly separated from their families, there were reports of physical, sexual and emotional abuse at these schools. Children were made to abandon their language, cultural beliefs and ways of life, and forced to adopt English and French, learn European-based school subjects, new habits and foreign religious practices. Any expression of Indigenous identity was harshly punished. The last residential school closed in 1996³ in Saskatchewan, but the negative legacy of these schools is still felt today.

Slavery (1689 – 1833)

While Canada commonly associates itself with the proud history of the Underground Railroad, Canadians often forget that the colonies that became Canada were home to slavery for over 200 years, up until 1834. European colonizers largely saw slavery in racial terms. When Britain took over New France, seven per cent of the colony was enslaved, two-thirds of which were Indigenous, and the other one-third, African.

Following the 1776 American Revolution, there was another influx of slaves. When loyalists⁴ moved to Canada, they brought 2000 enslaved people with them to the provinces of Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec.⁵ The legacies of slavery are still seen and felt today in the form of anti-Black racism.

Immigration Act (1869)

After Confederation, the Canadian Government made immigration policy a priority, with the idea that attracting newcomers would result in growth and economic gains.

In 1869, the Canadian Government passed the Immigration Act. On the surface, the Act had few restrictions. However, the policy was highly discriminatory in practice. The Canadian Government opened immigration offices in Britain, Europe and the United States. They attracted farmers and laborers of British, European and American ancestry and turned away workers, artisans and tradesmen from other countries⁶. The restrictions on immigrants from various other countries will be explained in detail below. And, immigrants who were considered ill or a threat to public safety were made to pay a levy.

³ Union of Ontario Indians. (2013). An Overview of the Indian Residential School System. Retrieved from <http://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/An-Overview-of-the-IRS-System-Booklet.pdf>

⁴ Loyalists were American colonists who supported the British Crown during the American Revolution.

⁵ Ostroff, J. (2017, June 17). Colonial Canada Had Slavery For More Than 200 Years. And Yes, It Still Matters Today. HuffPost Canada. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/06/17/slavery-canada-history_n_16806804.html

⁶ Makarenko, J. (2010, August 10). History of Canadian Immigration Policy. In *Immigration Policy in Canada: History, Administration and Debates*. Retrieved from <https://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/immigration-policy-canada-history-administration-and-debates.html>



The Chinese Head Tax (1885)

Canada enacted the Chinese Immigration Act in 1885, which included a head tax on Chinese immigrants coming to Canada. Almost all Chinese immigrants were made to pay a head tax of \$50, later raised to \$100 and then \$500. This put a huge financial burden on Chinese immigrants and it was the first official legislation in Canada to exclude immigration based on ethnic origin. When the tax was removed from the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923, the discrimination continued with the ban of Chinese immigration until 1947.⁷ The Canadian Government profited from this practice, collecting \$23 million in various head taxes over 38 years.⁸

***Komagata Maru* (1914)**

On May 1914, the *Komagata Maru* steamship sailed into Vancouver carrying hundreds of South Asian immigrants. Canada denied entry to almost all the 376 passengers, keeping the ship in the harbor for nearly two months. The ship was eventually forced to return to India, where there was a riot. British soldiers killed twenty passengers and jailed others.

Canada needed immigrants, but it was difficult for those from outside Britain, Europe and the United States to gain entry. Many were subject to the Continuous Passage Act of 1908, requiring that all immigrants arrive directly from their point of entry, with no stops in between, making it harder for those from non-European countries to come to Canada. The rule was in place until 1947.⁹

***MS St. Louis* (1939)**

MS St. Louis was a ship that left Hamburg, Germany in 1939, carrying 937 passengers, mostly Jewish refugees seeking asylum from Nazi Germany. The passengers had secured Cuban tourist visas. However, only 28 passengers were allowed entry into Cuba, and the ship was forced to leave Cuba shortly after. Despite petitioning for admission, the ship was denied entry to the United States and Canada, with both countries being hostile to the idea of Jewish immigration. The ship eventually made its way back to Europe with 907 passengers still on board. While the U.K, France, Belgium and the Netherlands took in many of the passengers, the Nazi invasion of these countries put these Jewish asylum seekers at risk again. It is estimated that 254 of those who returned to Europe died during the Holocaust. This episode in Canada's

⁷ Chan, A. (2016, September 6). Chinese Head Tax in Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-head-tax-in-canada/>

⁸ MTCSALC. 2011, March 29). Government collects \$23 million. In *Chinese Head Tax*. Retrieved from <http://www.roadtojustice.ca/laws/chinese-head-tax>

⁹ Husser, A. (2016, May 17). Komagata Maru apology: Ship's story represents 'dark chapter' of Canada's past. CBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/komagata-maru-background-apology-1.3584372>



history underscores Canada's anti-Semitic past and how that was translated into on immigration policies.¹⁰

The Japanese Internment (1942)

One of the most tragic events in Canada's history is the internment of Japanese Canadians and Canadians of Japanese descent during the Second World War. During this time, these citizens were forcibly removed from their homes on the West Coast to remote areas in eastern British Columbia and elsewhere. The Canadian government not only seized and sold their property, but they also forced them into mass deportation after the war ended.

Japanese migrants have been arriving in Canada since the turn of the 20th century. When anti-Asian sentiment and riots broke out protesting their presence, Prime Minister King gave the order that under the authority of the Order-in-Council, all people of Japanese ancestry would be excluded from a 100-mile radius from the Pacific Coast. In the end, 22 000 Canadian Japanese, of which sixty-five per cent were Canadian-born, were removed from their homes. Wartime restrictions were kept in place until April 1949.¹¹

The federal government apologized for the internment of Japanese-Canadians in 1988, over 40 years later, and offered compensation. The city of Vancouver apologized in 2013, over 70 years later.

Demolition of Africville (1964)

Black people have lived in Nova Scotia since 1749. A large number arrived in the late 1700s and early 1800s, many of whom were former slaves or black loyalists. The Black residents were subject to systemic racism but formed a tight-knit community, 'Africville', located on the outskirts of Halifax. Even though the residents paid municipal taxes, Africville was denied basic community services such as electricity, clean water or infrastructure. As the community became entrenched in poverty, the City of Halifax began to set up undesirable developments in the community that were a sore sight for its White residents.¹² These developments included the prison, a slaughterhouse and a city dump.

In 1964, the Halifax City Council evicted resistant residents of Africville with little to no compensation or consultation.¹³ Though there were protests and resistance, businesses and homes were demolished, and residents were relocated into housing projects, many of which

¹⁰ Schwinghamer, S. (2018). Canada and MS *St. Louis*. Retrieved from <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canada-and-ms-st-louis>

¹¹ Robinson, G. (2017). Internment of Japanese Canadians. Retrieved from

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/internment-of-japanese-canadians/>

¹² Rabble. (2018). Africville. Retrieved from <http://rabble.ca/toolkit/rabblepedia/africville>

¹³ McRae, M. (2017, February 23). The Story of Africville [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://humanrights.ca/blog/black-history-month-story-africville>



w ere also entrenched in poverty and slated to be demolished. These relocation efforts, made in the name of community revitalization, ruptured the Black community in Halifax. Today Africville has been declared a historical site and a formal government apology has been issued to the community's descendants.

Multiculturalism (1971)

In 1971, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act affirmed the government policy that every Canadian receive equal treatment, which respects and celebrates diversity. The Act recognized that English and French remain the official languages but that other languages may be used¹⁴.

While the Multiculturalism Act created a national narrative of an equitable and accepting society, this section has demonstrated how Canada has historically treated racialized groups as unequal, as written in law and in practice.

¹⁴ Mehta, A. (2013, May 27). Multiculturalism 1971 [Prezi]. Retrieved from <https://prezi.com/1yunoizapk9d/multiculturalism-1971/>



The impact on the workplace

Because of this history and the prevailing social attitudes and political discourses that subsequently emerged from this history, it is imperative for workplaces to recognize that many systemic barriers continue to persist for racialized groups.

As the data below illustrates, Indigenous and racialized people continue to face:

Higher rates of unemployment

In 2016, 9.2 per cent of racialized Canadians were unemployed versus 7.3 per cent of non-racialized Canadians. Specifically, those who identified as Arab had an 85 per cent higher unemployment rate; those who identified as Black had a 71 per cent higher unemployment rate; and those who identified as Chinese had an 8 per cent higher unemployment rate, compared to non-racialized Canadians. Additionally, the income gap between visible minorities, recent immigrants and Indigenous people and the rest of Canadians remains high, according to 2016 census data.¹⁵

According to a 2015 Statistics Canada report, Aboriginal people earn less, have higher unemployment rates, and were less likely to work in knowledge education (professional, management and technical positions) than their non-aboriginal peers.¹⁶

Workplace racism and discrimination

Job applicants with Asian names and all-Canadian qualifications received 20.1 per cent fewer callbacks than those with Anglo names from large 500+ employee companies. They received 39.4 per cent and 37.1 per cent fewer callbacks, respectively, from mid-sized and small employees¹⁷.

In one field experiment, published in 2011, University of Toronto researchers sent almost 8000 resumes to employers in Canada's three largest cities. They found that job seekers with names like Matthew Wilson were 35 per cent more likely to get a callback than those with a name like Samir Sharma, regardless of work experience, education or language proficiency.¹⁸

¹⁵ Block, S. (2017, November 29). Racialized Canadians continue to face barriers to decent work. Behind the Numbers. Retrieved from <http://behindthenumbers.ca/2017/11/29/racialized-canadians-barriers-to-work/>

¹⁶ Bowness, S. (2018, May 11). Workplace taking cues from employees to become more Indigenous friendly. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/careers/article-workplaces-taking-cues-from-employees-to-become-more-indigenous/>

¹⁷ Keung, N. (2017, January 25). Asian job seekers face disadvantage even when they have higher degrees, study finds. The Star. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/news/immigration/2017/01/25/better-education-doesnt-help-asian-job-candidates-beat-out-anglos-study.html>

¹⁸ Grant, T. (2016, September 26). Canada's racial divide: Confronting racism in our own backyard. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/cracks-in-the-narrative-confronting-the-harsh-truths-of-racism-in-canada/article32070545/>



One third (35%) of Muslims in Canada have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in the past five years because of their religion, ethnicity/culture, language or sex. According to reports, this treatment was most commonly experienced in the workplace.¹⁹

Low representation in leadership positions

According to a 2016 survey, Visible minorities hold just 4.5 per cent of director positions in the top 500 Canadian companies by revenues²⁰.

The third largest population of Black Canadians is in the Ottawa-Gatineau area. According to Statistics Canada, the region has seen an increase of 73.6 per cent of Black people between 2006-2016, yet they are not represented in senior positions in public office and businesses. Seven out of 338 MPs in the House of Commons are Black.²¹

This data speaks to the long journey ahead for Canadian employers, in addressing systemic barriers and closing the inclusion gap between racialized groups. Those at the forefront of diversity and inclusion in the workplace must engage in these conversations around race and racism in the workplace to create lasting change.

¹⁹ EnvironicsInstitute. (2016). Survey of Muslims in Canada. Retrieved from https://www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/survey-of-muslims-in-canada-2016/final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=fb85533_2

²⁰ The Canadian Press. (2017, November 22). Be more courageous about diversity, Deloitte report urges Canadian companies. CBC. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/deloitte-diversity-report-1.4413914>

²¹ Florence, N., McKie, D. (2018, March 30). Local black Canadians face 'systemic barriers' to senior-level jobs, critics say. CBC. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/black-population-ottawa-increase-barriers-work-1.4600403>

Building race-conscious organizations



There are many ways organizations can ally with racialized groups and work towards more equitable workplaces:

Protect workers by developing anti-racism/race-equity workplace policies and training

Going beyond respect in the workplace or more general policies, having a specific workplace policy on racism signals to your staff that you are serious about this issue. It also signals to your racialized staff that they have a resource available to them if they wish to file a complaint related to racism and discrimination.

The policy needs to be complemented with training and at the very least, intentional effort to make it known that such a policy exists.

Here is an example of an anti-racism policy, taken from the website of the Ontario Public Service:

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) is committed to identifying, preventing and eliminating systemic racism in all aspects of employment and leading by example in the advancement of racial equity. The OPS is strengthened by targeted measures to identify, remove, prevent and mitigate any systemic racism barriers in employment facing Indigenous, racialized and Black employees.

See OPS' full Anti-Racism policy here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-public-service-anti-racism-policy#section-8>

Invest in race-focused diversity and inclusion initiatives

As most diversity and inclusion practitioners know, a budget is needed to make this work sustainable. If you have a diversity and inclusion budget, try to ensure a portion of it is dedicated to anti-racism or race-focused initiatives.

Forms of investment could include:

- » Scholarship programs for marginalized groups
- » Financially compensating diversity champions who are doing this work – this provides legitimacy to these initiatives and recognizes the intellectual labour put into the work.
- » Sponsor local race-focused initiatives, events and programming. Community organizations who host these types of events are sometimes in need of financial support.
- » Supplier diversity – purchase goods and services for your organization from minority-owned businesses. This could be as simple as catering your next workplace event from the local Indigenous-owned restaurant or switching paper suppliers.

If you don't have spare financial resources, consider offering your facilities after-hours to those who need community-organizing spaces.



Partner with specific racialized communities in and outside of the workplace

Involve community cultural groups at the design stage of your program, service or event. Don't simply invite them after the fact. Partnership is about sharing power and resources from the outset of any given project. Ensure diverse voices are at the decision-making table from the very beginning.

Partnering with racialized communities also ensures that your workforce is aware of initiatives and program happening in your local area, not just inside your workplace.

Recognize that community organizations have a wealth of expertise, skills and experiences that they can bring to the decision-making table. Respect this and build ways for this knowledge to be shared with others.

The City of Toronto is seeking 12 Black Torontonians (African descent or origin, African Black Caribbean, African-Canadian, Canadians of African descent) who would like to join the Anti-Black Racism Partnership & Accountability Circle to guide and support the full implementation of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.

- » Learn more about the Partnership & Accountability Circle and how to submit a nomination: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/toronto-for-all/anti-black-racism/partnership-accountability-circle-2/>

Develop mentorship and sponsorship programs for racialized employees

Recognize that many groups, particularly newcomers, are excluded from niche networking spaces. Developing mentorship and sponsorship programs for racialized employees can be one way to make these spaces more accessible. These programs can also help individuals cultivate hard and soft skills that are unique to the Canadian workplace.

Be intentional about the design of the program. Some mentorship programs can come off as condescending if not designed well. Recognize that newcomers have skills and knowledge that they can share. Well-designed programs recognize that learning is reciprocal.

Target anti-racism/racial equity initiatives to address Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism.

Recognize that racialized groups are racialized differently across Canada because of our history and contemporary socio-political discourses. These discourses are perpetuated in the media, our education system, the private sector and in politics. This means that a blanket approach to racism is not necessarily as impactful as targeted approaches that address the most pressing forms of racism in Canada today – namely, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and Islamophobia. Consider organizing a myth debunking campaign on race and racism in Canada, bringing in guest speakers and/or organizing ally education opportunities for White and racialized Canadians alike.

Considerations when collecting racial demographics



The most impactful workplace programs, services, events and institutional changes emerge as a response to data. Measuring your workforce is one way to identify race-based barriers and better understand who may be excluded at your organization.

Below are key considerations for any employer who is considering collecting racial demographics:

Aim: Have a clear objective

Make sure you clearly communicate the objective of your survey. Whatever the objective is, be clear on why you are collecting data and how you are going to use it at your organization. Having a clear aim will ensure your communications strategy is focused and effective.

Scope: Measure more than race

Measuring more than race will allow you to capture the nuanced lived experiences of your employees and identify where specific types of exclusion may be transpiring within your organization. For example, in our [Diversity by the Numbers: The Legal Profession](#) research, we found that racialized women were severely underrepresented at the leadership levels of the law firms we surveyed. This finding could only be generated by measuring race, gender and role, amongst other workforce demographics. Measuring more than race will help you build a comprehensive understanding of what may be going on in your organization.

Data types: use mixed methods in your research

Numbers are great, but employees' lived experiences and stories will help give life to your data. Considering having an open-ended comments section in your survey for participants to anonymously share their experiences. You could also supplement the survey with focus groups and interviews to tap into specific experiences that you're interested in learning more about.

This qualitative data will also help you identify exclusionary practices or behaviour that you may not have considered otherwise. This is also where participants may shed light on unspoken or unwritten rules or practices that remain exclusionary.

Data collection: Develop inclusive, targeted categories

When collecting racial demographics, it is important to develop survey language that is reflective of diverse racial, ethnic and national identities. Your employees should see themselves reflected in the survey. They should also be given an opportunity to tell you how they self-identify in case they don't see themselves reflected. This could simply be provided through an open-ended option.

Similarly, consider providing concrete definitions of your categories so that people understand what they are being asked. For example, the term 'visible minority' is confusing for people who live in areas where racialized people make up most of the local population. Define what you are asking so that everyone is responding with the same understanding in mind. If you need some help with standardizing definitions, see our Glossary at the end of this toolkit.



If your organization operates around the world, recognize that race is socially constructed differently around the world. Use appropriate terms when developing survey categories and make sure your survey is culturally responsive. Using the country's national census can give you an idea of what terms are commonly used. Below is a guide to give you an idea of how race and ethnicity are described in Canada, the U.S.A, England and Wales, and Brazil, as an example:

	Year	Source	Term for "Race" in census	Categories included in census	Categories not included in census
Canada	2016	Statistics Canada	Visible minority	White, Black, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, South Asian, Arab, West Asian	
United States	2016	United States Census Bureau	Race	White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino (reported separately from "Race"), Asian	Two or more Races, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
England/Wales	2011	Office for National Statistics	Ethnicity or national identity	Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Other White, African, Caribbean, Other Black, Asian/Asian British, Chinese, Other Asian, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Any other Ethnic group, Arab	White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian, White and Black African, Other mixed
Brazil	2008	Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics	Colour or race	White, Black (Negra, Preta), Others	Mixed Race, Indigenous, Light Brunette, Brunette, Brown, Yellow, Brazilian, Mulatto, German, Italian, Light



Tips on how to boost your response rate:

Survey data is only useful when you have a strong response rate from your population. Below are some considerations when trying to strategize for a high response rate:

- » Promote other diversity and inclusion initiatives prior to your survey launch to make clear that the survey is part of a larger campaign or diversity and inclusion portfolio. Your survey should not be the first time your staff has heard of your organization's diversity and inclusion department, strategy or initiatives.
- » Communicate about your survey well in advance through an in-person and online campaign.
- » Provide your employees with ample time to complete your survey – 2-4 weeks is recommended.
- » Send regular reminders during your survey window.
- » Be explicit about how demographic information will be used, stored and protected. Recognize that some diverse groups have had their personal information misused and therefore remain mistrustful of institutions that ask for demographic data. Employees need to be confident that their information will be handled with care and will be used for purposes that will have an indirect or direct benefit to them.
- » Provide training to staff on diversity and inclusion so that they are familiar with why diversity and inclusion is important for your organization.
- » Leverage Employee Resource Groups and other diversity networks to circulate and promote the survey.
- » Be explicit on what happens next, after data has been collected. Many employees' disengagement from surveys is related to lack of faith or trust that anything will change or come out of the data.
- » If possible, offer incentives to complete the survey. Food and/or gift cards are strong incentives.

How do employers use the data?

In our Community of Practice events, we asked employers to provide us with some examples of what they have done with survey data. Below you will find examples of how employers have used data meaningfully:

“After we collected workforce demographics, we...”

Identified gaps in recruitment and developed targeted outreach programs

Implemented training for recruitment

Monitored retention

Developed more inclusive language in job postings and descriptions

Set goals / targets for women in leadership, amongst others

Used the data for succession planning



Used the numbers to create accountability plans and frameworks

Used the numbers to show evidence of progress at our organization

- “The data gave us an idea of our organization’s evolution.”

Re-developed our entire D&I strategy

Started to build internal Employee Resource Groups

Implemented an anti-racism strategy

Used the data to build a report for funding purposes

Compared it with labour force data

Delivered diversity and inclusion training to all staff

Established a pre-employment placement program.

- E.g. “We determined that some groups in our local area may not meet the pre-requisites for jobs. However, they were the target population we were trying to recruit for. So, we developed a tailored pre-employment program so that they could develop the skills needed for the job before they could apply.”

Identified a focus for the year and determined how to improve strategies.

Created sub-categories in the survey (i.e. added more options on the self-ID survey for the next round of data collection)

Tackling 'reverse racism'



Very little is written about the phenomenon of ‘reverse racism’ in Canada. However, when we surveyed employers prior to the Community of Practice event asking them about salient topics, the challenge of reverse racism was repeatedly identified. Albeit anecdotal, we see evidence that the concept of reverse racism is gaining traction in Canadian workplaces.

Seen as a backlash against diversity and inclusion rhetoric, reverse racism is described as the experience of White people feeling like equity is at *their* expense.²² In other words, White people feel like they are losing advantage or status when organizations take steps to even out the playing field for those who are other than straight, white, and able-bodied.

In the literature, there is discussion on racism being perceived as a ‘zero-sum’ game, in which less bias against diverse groups is perceived as more bias against White people.²³ In the U.S, there is new research that suggests that White people now believe that anti-White bias is more prevalent than anti-Black bias.²⁴ The media has played a role in making such claims visible in popular social and political discourse.

Such sentiment, of course, runs counter to the aims of diversity and inclusion. When White employees begin to feel that diversity and inclusion is rooted in anti-White bias, an organization’s diversity and inclusion strategy or initiatives can go awry. For example, in one study, it was shown that after learning about increasing demographic diversity, White people exhibited increased fear and anger towards minority groups. In the same study, White people perceived unfair treatment to their own group in a ‘pro-diversity’ company, as compared to a ‘neutral’ (i.e. no explicit messaging about diversity) company.²⁵

There is evidence that some White people perceive and feel a personal threat by organizational efforts towards diversity and inclusion. This feeling of threat or belief in reverse racism has real consequences on the workplace. It could foster resentment, negativity and hostility. There may be a backlash, a festering of ‘backroom’ anti-diversity sentiment and actions that can stall, undermine or even terminate planned diversity and inclusion programming.

For these reasons, organizations must be pro-active about reverse racism when organizing any diversity and inclusion initiatives, but especially when organizing anti-racism or race-focused initiatives. Crafting strategic communications is especially important in this effort.

²² Norton, M.I & Sommers, S.R. (2011). Whites See Racism as a Zero-Sum Game That They Are Now Losing. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6, 215-218.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Dover, T. L., Major, B., & Kaiser, C.R. (2015). Members of high-status groups are threatened by pro-diversity organizational messages. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 62, 58 – 67



Here are three key messages to embed in your organization's communications and initiatives, to address feelings of reverse racism.

Diversity and inclusion benefits everyone

Diversity and inclusion strategies operate to achieve universal goals for the organization, which benefit everyone – not just minority groups. Sometimes, organizations need to execute 'targeted approaches' to achieve these universal goals. This is called 'targeted universalism'.²⁶ Make sure to continuously communicate these universal goals to your employees.

E.g. Company ABC has an organizational goal of achieving a 90 per cent employee retention rate (the universal goal). The company knows that high retention rates contribute to the overall success of the business. High retention rates save costs, contribute to employee engagement and position the company as an employer of choice. To achieve this universal goal, Company ABC investigates the demographic composition of those who leave the organization. They find that Black employees show the highest turnover rate. They recognize that this fact jeopardizes the achievement of the company's universal goal. Therefore, Company ABC puts forward resources to investigate why Black employees are leaving. They also allocate resources to resolve some of these 'push-factors'. By focusing on the group which is impeding their universal goal, this targeted approach is not only an anti-racism initiative, but it is a business strategy. The return on investment is going to benefit ALL employees. For those who feel threatened by diversity and inclusion efforts or only see resources put towards 'Black inclusion', messaging on targeted universalism may help achieve buy-in.

²⁶ Haas Institute for a fair and inclusive society. (2017). *Targeted Universalism*. Retrieved from <https://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/targeteduniversalism>



Diversity and inclusion is not a quota-checking exercise

In Canada, we don't have quotas. Instead we have hiring goals to encourage employers to be mindful and proactive in seeking diverse candidates. We are often challenged by whether we should hire for merit or for diversity. This should not be a dichotomy, as the answer does not lie in one or the other goal, but in integrating both of these goals. Hiring for diversity is not about hiring a less qualified candidate in the name of diversity. Rather, hiring for diversity means your organization wants to broaden the talent pool of qualified candidates to ensure that your workforce is more representative of the availability of diverse talent that exists in the current labour market.

Diversity and inclusion is necessary, even in visibly diverse regions

Feelings of reverse racism may be acutely felt in regions where there is a significant population of racialized people - perhaps even larger than the White population. In these areas, diversity and inclusion efforts may be perceived as unnecessary, redundant or 'negligent of the White minority'. It is particularly important for organizations in these regions to strategically communicate that diversity and inclusion is not just about visible diversity at your organization. It is about ensuring everyone has equal access to opportunities, such as leadership positions. Even in visibly diverse regions, we still see racial inequities transpire in workplaces. This is why we need to focus on diversity *and* inclusion. Use data (internal and external) to make this message clear.

Canadian workplace
examples of race-focused
initiatives



The following are real-life, innovative examples of race-focused initiatives that employers shared with us.

Develop culturally responsive policies

Include a clause in one's collective agreement or a workplace policy that states a support person, such as an Elder, will be present during disciplinary action.

Embed race-focused content in pre-approved training programs

Sometimes leaders are resistant to approving race-focused training. It can be perceived as contentious or risky, or one is told that the organization doesn't have enough money to focus on delivering this training. If this is the case, consider conducting a systematic review of all pre-approved and funded forms of training (e.g. Respect in the Workplace) and identify areas in which race-focused content could be embedded. This can be one way to start the conversation.

Participation in Community Iftar

Iftar is the breaking of one's daily fast during Ramadan, a holy month for Muslims. Many local mosques and cultural centers host community Iftars. Circulating this information and encouraging employees to attend is one way to promote inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue.

Develop newcomer networking opportunities

Many organizations purchase expensive tables at conferences or galas, events which serve as key professional networking opportunities. New comers often don't have access to such opportunities. Consider partnering with local newcomer centers and purchasing a table exclusively for new immigrants.

Movie screening and workplace discussion of '13th'

Lunch n' Learns or movie screenings can act as valuable social and educational events. '13th' (2016) is one movie that can be used to start a dialogue about systemic racism.

- For Canadian content, 'Indian Horse' (2017) is a recommended movie about the Indian Residential School system.



Community Circles

It is important for employers, especially government entities, to develop positive relations with the racialized groups they serve. One workplace, a municipality, discussed what they called 'Community Circles', a workplace initiative to encourage staff to enter racialized neighborhoods and get to know the residents better. This program emerged after they found that their staff only interacted with racialized groups, and particularly Black populations, at times when a conflict emerged. These types of repeated interactions began to cement negative views towards these communities. As a response, the municipality developed 'Community Circles' as a pro-active approach to community-building and conflict resolution.

Team or workplace participation at local Powwows

Powwows are traditional Indigenous social gatherings which involve music, dance, clothing, food and art. They promote cultural pride and respect between generations and serve as key culture sharing sites between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Many Indigenous Friendship Centers or community centers host powwows open to the community. These gatherings can serve as valuable learning opportunities for your employees to engage with Indigenous culture.

Spotlight lived experience

Helping staff understand the lived experiences of their colleagues can effectively build positive race relations. Featuring blogs, panels and discussion groups is one way to spotlight others' stories and foster empathy towards those facing workplace barriers. Employee stories are also one way to help White staff in particular to recognize that their experience of race may be quite different than others'.

These types of events can be aligned with strategic time periods. For example, during Ramadan, consider asking if any Muslim employee would be interested in writing a blog or participating in a panel to share their experience of how their faith intersects with their work identity.



Elder – in – Residence program

Elders are very important members of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. The term Elder refers to someone “who has attained a high degree of understanding of First Nation, Métis, or Inuit history, traditional teachings, ceremonies, and healing practices. Elders have earned the right to pass this knowledge on to others and to give advice and guidance on personal issues, as well as on issues affecting their communities and nations. First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples value their Elders and all older people, and address them with the utmost respect”.²⁷

Many universities have instituted a ‘Elders-in-residence’ program. This program is designed to support Indigenous employees or students. Elders are available for guidance, counsel and support and often play a role in developing cultural programming at the university.

²⁷ Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. (2018). *Elders*. Retrieved from [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/Teacher_Resources/Curriculum_Resources_\(by_subjects\)/Social_Sciences_and_Humanities/Elders.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/Teacher_Resources/Curriculum_Resources_(by_subjects)/Social_Sciences_and_Humanities/Elders.html)

Glossary



Fear about using the incorrect terminology can stifle conversations on race in the workplace. Below is a glossary you may wish to share with your workforce.

Aboriginal Peoples²⁸:

“A collective name for the original people of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution (the *Constitution Act*, 1982) recognizes three groups of Aboriginal Peoples – First Nations, Métis and Inuit – as separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. The word is often used as an umbrella term for all three peoples but it should be used when referring to only one or two of the three recognized groups.”

Anti-racism²⁹:

“an active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism as well as the oppression and injustice racism causes.”

Discrimination³⁰:

“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 (note: this is not a legal definition).”

Ethnicity³¹:

“sharing a distinctive cultural and historical tradition often associated with race, place of origin, ancestry or creed.”

Elder³²:

²⁸ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2018). Appendix 1: Glossary of human rights terms. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/teaching-human-rights-ontario-guide-ontario-schools/appendix-1-glossary-human-rights-terms>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. (2018). *Elders*. Retrieved from [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/Teacher_Resources/Curriculum_Resources_\(by_subjects\)/Social_Sciences_and_Humanities/Elders.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/deepeningknowledge/Teacher_Resources/Curriculum_Resources_(by_subjects)/Social_Sciences_and_Humanities/Elders.html)



“Elders are very important members of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. The term Elder refers to someone who has attained a high degree of understanding of First Nation, Métis, or Inuit history, traditional teachings, ceremonies, and healing practices. Elders have earned the right to pass this knowledge on to others and to give advice and guidance on personal issues, as well as on issues affecting their communities and nations. First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples value their Elders and all older people, and address them with the utmost respect.”

Power³³:

“access to privileges such as information/knowledge, connections, experience and expertise, resources and decision-making that enhance a person’s chances of getting what they need to live a comfortable, safe, productive and profitable life.”

Privilege³⁴:

“unearned power, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities that exist for members of the dominant group(s) in society. Can also refer to the relative privilege of one group compared to another.”

White fragility³⁵:

Coined by antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo, white fragility is defined as “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. Racial stress results from an interruption to what is racially familiar.”

First Nation(s)/ First Nations People³⁶:

“This term became common use in the 1970s to replace the word “Indian.” Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition exists. The term has also been adopted to replace the word “Band” in the naming of communities. Many people today prefer to be called “First

³³ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2018). Appendix 1: Glossary of human rights terms. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/teaching-human-rights-ontario-guide-ontario-schools/appendix-1-glossary-human-rights-terms>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ DiAngelo, R. (2011). White Fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3, 54- 70.

³⁶ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2018). Appendix 1: Glossary of human rights terms. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/teaching-human-rights-ontario-guide-ontario-schools/appendix-1-glossary-human-rights-terms>



Nations” or “First Nations People” instead of “Indians.” Generally, “First Nations People” is used to describe both Status and Non-Status Indians. The term is rarely used as a synonym for “Aboriginal Peoples” because it usually does not include Inuit or Métis people.”

Indian³⁷:

“This term is used to identify people the Government of Canada recognizes as having Indian status – people who have an identifiable band, who live or were born on a reserve, and/or who are recognized under a complex set of rules under the *Indian Act (1985)*. The term does not include Inuit or Métis peoples. There are three categories of Indians in Canada: Status Indians; Non-Status Indians; and Treaty Indians. Note: The term “Indian” is considered outdated by many people, and “First Nation(s)” is typically used instead.”

Indigenous³⁸:

“This term is generally used in the international context, and refers to peoples who are original to a particular land or territory. This term is very similar to “Aboriginal” and has a positive connotation.”

Métis³⁹:

“French term meaning “mixed blood.” The Canadian Constitution recognizes Métis people as one of the three Aboriginal Peoples. The term is used broadly to describe people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people.”

Inuit⁴⁰:

“the Aboriginal Peoples of Arctic Canada who live primarily in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and northern parts of Labrador and Québec. The word Inuit means “people” in the Inuit language – Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk. Their traditional languages, customs and cultures are distinctly different from those of the First Nations and Métis.”

³⁷ Ibid.
³⁸ Ibid.
³⁹ Ibid.
⁴⁰ Ibid.

**Race⁴¹:**

“There is no such thing as race – instead, it is a “social construct.” This means that society forms ideas of race based on geographic, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors, as well as physical traits, even though none of these can legitimately be used to classify groups of people. See *Racialization*.”

Racialization⁴²:

“the process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter and affect economic, political and social life”

Racial profiling⁴³:

“any action that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion or place of origin, or a combination of these, rather than on a reasonable suspicion to single out a person for greater scrutiny or different treatment.”

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

**Racism⁴⁴:**

“a belief that one group is superior or inferior to others. Racism can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs or hate crimes. It can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, people don’t even realize they have these beliefs. Instead, they are assumptions that have evolved over time and have become part of systems and institutions.”

White privilege⁴⁵:

“The unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed upon people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.”

- See Peggy McIntosh’s article/tool “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” to explore this concept further:

<http://www.racialeguitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ McIntosh, P. (1989). *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. Retrieved from http://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/boards/citizenequity/pdfs/w hite_privilege.pdf

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Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)

CCDI has a mission to help the organizations we work with be inclusive, free of prejudice and discrimination – and to generate the awareness, dialogue and action for people to recognize diversity as an asset and not an obstacle. Through the research, reports and toolkits we develop and our workshops, events and workplace consultations, we're helping Canadian employers understand their diversity, plan for it and create inclusion.

CCDI's leadership has a proven model that's cultivated trust as an impartial third party. Our expertise is focused on the topics of inclusion that are relevant in Canada now and the regional differences that shape diversity.

A charitable organization that thinks like a business, we have created a niche with our innovative research technology and data analysis that brings a deeper understanding of Canadian diversity demographics and mindsets at any given moment.

CCDI is grateful for the support of our over 170 Employer Partners across Canada.

Contact us

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