

OCASI

ANTI-RACISM ANTI-OPPRESSION (ARAO) POLICY

Outline

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1. **Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Policy**

1.1. Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Policy Statement¹

To support our mission to achieve full equality, access and participation for immigrants and refugees in every aspect of Canadian life we are committed at OCASI to ensuring the same within our organization systems, structures, programs and practices for all our stakeholders.

OCASI aims to ensure that all of our employees, management, volunteers, students, members² and visitors can exercise their right to work, volunteer, access programs and enjoy an environment that is free from racism and other forms of oppression.

We believe that the first step in addressing racism and other oppressions at OCASI is to develop consistent commitments, to live by them and to work actively to eliminate all forms of discrimination among people in and at the Council, within the immigrant-serving sector and in the wider community.

We believe this begins with:

- Valuing and recognizing that the racial and ethno-cultural diversity of our members, employees, management, volunteers, Board and community are sources of enrichment and strength and that the talents and contributions of the diversity of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are immeasurable social, economic and political assets to Canada and within OCASI.
- Recognizing, acknowledging and critically engaging the issues of racism and other oppressions that create lack of access, equality and participation for traditionally marginalized communities that include our stakeholders. That this stems from the pervasive ways in which forms of oppression are systemically embedded in the dominant culture and social institutions of Canadian society creating a legacy of systemic power and privilege for specific groups at the expense of others who face ongoing systemic barriers and exclusion from full access and participation in social and economic institutions. That this is reflected in a legacy of colonial historical and ongoing injustice towards the First Nations, Metis, Inuit and racialized peoples with systemic inequities based on race, gender, class, religious beliefs, physical ability,

¹ We have drawn on a number of organizational policies for this statement but in particular that of the Access Alliance Multicultural Health Center.

² Member means a member of OCASI, and includes Member Agencies, Associate Member Agencies and Director Members

mental ability, age, sexual orientation and other forms of discrimination.

- Understanding that as multi-dimensional individuals human beings are an intersection of various identities and therefore often experience intersectional oppression that cannot be addressed in isolation and any struggle or effort against oppression must recognize and address the complex interlocking of these oppressions to effectively facilitate access, participation and thus authentic valuing and celebration of all the diversity of OCASI stakeholders.
- Recognizing, as an organization advocating for the rights of immigrants and refugees, that refugees' flight is the result of experiences of oppression, and that refugees and immigrants are subject to various forms of discrimination and oppression within Canada. Specifically that the talents and contributions of immigrants and refugees are consistently exploited and devalued in Canadian society through a system of institutionalized and often overt racism and oppression compromising the im/migration experience with inequities.
- Recognizing that oppressive acts and mechanisms within OCASI can prevent our stakeholders from engaging in ways that fully reflect their abilities, experiences and contributions. We recognize that such barriers can limit not only their contributions, but also their potential to engage within OCASI at all levels, particularly at the levels of leadership and decision-making.

To this end OCASI is committed to:

- Combating oppression that prevents refugees, immigrants, racialized people and other marginalized groups from participating fully in Canadian society in and through our work, so that their rights are recognized and protected and identifying and challenging relevant inequity within the settlement service sector;
 - Facilitating the identification and elimination of the barriers embedded within systems such as health care, social and settlement services, immigration and the criminal justice system that have a disproportionate impact on refugees, immigrants, racialized and the First Nations, Metis & Inuit;
 - As an advocacy organization committed to social justice OCASI proactively going beyond the protected grounds³ set out by Canadian human rights legislation, which does not consistently offer explicit protection for immigrants, refugees and people living in poverty. A purposeful integrated anti-racist anti oppression approach will be critically informed by an intersectional understanding of the impact and experience of im/migration on the basis of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, first language and socio-economic class among other personal characteristics to ensure addressing related issues.
- As an employer and service provider not tolerating and proactively addressing any intentional or unintentional acts of oppression towards an individual or a group of people that creates barriers to access or participation on the basis of personal or group characteristics including but not limited to the legally protected grounds where

³ The protected grounds are the groups protected under Canadian federal and provincial Human Rights legislation such as under the Canadian Human Rights Act, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, record of offences, sex (including pregnancy) and along with these grounds the Ontario Human Rights Code includes citizenship, creed (religion), ancestry, place of origin, gender identity and expression, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance.

applicable under the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) such as race, colour, ancestry, ethnic origin, place of origin, citizenship, creed (religion), age, gender identity, gender expression, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance, record of offences in all aspects of its operation and at all levels of the organization. Related violations will be resolved through the organizations complaints protocols⁴ and members complaints policy⁵ and bylaws;⁶

- Examining and improving all our interactions, practices, policies, protocols and programs on an ongoing basis, to ensure compliance with this policy, that we are consistently accountable to being accessible and barrier free and that the communities that we represent and members of our organization see themselves valued and reflected within the organization;
 - Ensuring that our mission, operations, structure, policy and systems – programs, membership, employment, board membership and volunteer opportunities – reflect, embrace and are completely accessible to the diversity of our stakeholder communities;
 - Ensuring equitable opportunities for participation of the diversity of our stakeholders at all levels of the organization, including leadership and decision making;
 - Ensuring accommodation on grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code legislation;
 - Increasing awareness and facilitating the proactive creation of open and affirming environments for the participation of people with disabilities; lesbians, gays and bisexuals; and Trans and Intersex people;
 - Implementing and maintaining a procedure for dealing with incidents of harassment or discriminatory behaviour.
- Supporting other work including networks, coalitions and community initiatives that are committed to the elimination of racism and oppression including solidarity with First Nations, Metis & Inuit peoples;
- Proactively engaging in anti-racism anti-oppression training for our Board, employees, management, volunteers and members to foster anti-racism anti-oppression values, attitudes, behaviours and practices.

1.2. Purpose of the Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Policy

The purpose of this policy is to foster anti-racism anti-oppression values and attitudes and to develop anti-racism anti-oppression knowledge and practices within OCASI, among the Board, employees, management, volunteers, placement students, members, associates, contractors⁷ and anyone who does work at, for or on behalf of the organization and to support the efforts of OCASI in meeting our commitments re the elimination of racism and other oppressions in the organizations external work and internal systems. Employees,

⁴ See OCASI Personnel Policy Manual # 32 - Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, # 33 - Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy, # 45 - Complaints Policy

⁵ Members Complaint Policy (It is understood that while member agencies may have varied accountability policies, protocols and mechanisms that may be inconsistent with this policy they will be held accountable to this policy in their work and interactions with and on behalf of OCASI.)

⁶ See Bylaw 7.8 a – Revocation of Membership

⁷ (Includes seasonal, temporary, short term and part time employees, vendors and suppliers)

management, Board members and volunteers will be held accountable and evaluated as part of performance appraisals and Board evaluation. Organizational systems, policies and practices will be periodically evaluated.

OCASI recognizes that in the process of compliance with this policy some may require new learning and understanding to navigate what may be new experiences and that this process of learning may sometimes occur through mistakes and conflict. OCASI is committed to fostering an environment that supports evolution and change through increased personal self-reflection and awareness. At the same time, OCASI will prioritize ensuring that no one endures disrespectful or oppressive treatment in this process. Genuine efforts for new learning will be facilitated through feedback, conflict mediation and resolution that assumes goodwill, unless otherwise demonstrated through persistent and/or deliberate failure to comply with related organizational expectations.

This policy ensures consistency with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the aims and objectives of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, related Violence Prevention Policies under Bill 168 amendment to the Occupational Health & Safety Act, evolving Human Rights case law, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Employment Standards and other relevant labour statutes and with OCASI's mission and core values to create a healthy and respectful environment. This policy is also consistent with international human rights promoting resolutions in concert with the advocacy goals of OCASI and works in harmony with the organizations Violence Prevention and Harassment Prevention policies to assist OCASI in complying with respective Canadian federal, Ontario provincial and Toronto municipal anti-discrimination policies to meet related funding requirements.

This policy is grounded in evidence from progressive understandings of current research, successful practices, and personal lived experiences meant to inform OCASI as a healing and nurturing environment for those who face racism and other oppressions that affect their ability to achieve the social determinants of health⁸ and to ensure that we address related barriers in our work.

1.3. Application

- This policy applies to all members of the OCASI community, which includes all employees, management, board members, volunteers, students, contractors (including vendors and suppliers), members, visitors, community partners, and any other associates.
- This policy applies to all activities which take place at the organization offices, as well as to organization related activities which occur elsewhere, including but not limited to business undertakings, teaching or training programs, research initiatives, community and outreach projects, partnership activities, social functions, fundraising events, and activities involving access to the organization's computer or communications systems. Related harassment, which occurs between any member of the OCASI community, where their relationship originates in the organization and has the potential to have impact on their work at OCASI, at non-work related venues and events where they are present with each other, will be addressed under the Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy.
- All contractual relationships between OCASI and its business, research, and community partners are governed by this policy. All such contracts and agreements will include a provision requiring compliance with this policy.

⁸ The physical, social, economic and environmental factors that contribute to the living conditions that shape health such as but not excluded to income and social status, social support networks, education and literacy, employment and working conditions, social environments, physical environments, healthy childhood development, food insecurity, housing, health programs and practices, gender, race and disability.

- Board and its employee the Executive Director are accountable for the implementation of this policy. All members of the OCASI community are responsible for adhering to OCASI's Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression policy.

**1.4. Implementation Plan: Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression (ARAO) Policy
(Please see attached)**

Related policies:

*OCASI Personnel Policy Manual # 32 - Workplace Violence Prevention & Policy,
OCASI Personnel Policy Manual # 33 - Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy,
OCASI Personnel Policy Manual # 45 - Complaints Policy,
Members Complaint Policy
Bylaw 7.8 a – Revocation of Membership*

Glossary of Terms

Ableism⁹

Ableism; A term used to describe normal assumptions and practices that often lead to unequal treatment of people with apparent or assumed physical, intellectual, or behavioral differences.

Access

“the right or opportunity to reach, use, or visit; admittance”. (Oxford Dictionary, 9th edition)

Accommodation

The legal duty under the Ontario Human Rights Code to consider the needs of persons with disabilities up-front. This means designing for buildings, processes, programs or services inclusively. If existing physical structures, systems, or attitudes create barriers, they must be removed. Where it is impossible to remove barriers without undue hardship, special arrangements must be made so that persons with disabilities can fully participate.

Ally¹⁰

An ally is a member of the dominant group who acts against oppression out of a belief that eliminating oppression will benefit the targets of oppression and dominant group members. In the struggle against racism, for example, White peoples are allies who take leadership from activists who are people of colour and First Nations, Metis & Inuit people.

Anti-racism

The practice of identifying, challenging, preventing, eliminating, and changing the values, structures, policies, programs, practices, and behaviours that perpetuate racism

Bias

An inclination, learning, opinion, perspective, preference, prejudice formed without reasonable justification that then influences a person’s or group’s ability to evaluate a particular situation accurately or objectively; an unfounded preference for or against. It must be noted, however, that every piece of writing, image, and audiovisual production has a bias, and it is important that authors, readers or viewers be able to identify this bias.

Classism

Discrimination of group of persons sharing a similar social position and certain economic, political, and cultural characteristics.

⁹ Definition adapted from <http://www.streetsie.com/ableism-definition-normal/>

¹⁰ Lopes, Tina and Thomas Barb, *Dancing on Live Embers Challenging Racism in Organizations*

Culture

Totality of ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, norms, communication styles and way of life of a group of individuals who share certain ethnic, historical, linguistic, racial, religious and social background. Culture is a complex and dynamic organization of meaning, knowledge, artifacts and symbols that guide human behaviour. It accounts for shared patterns of thoughts and action, and contributes to human, social and physical survival.

Cultural Competence

A set of congruent attitudes, behaviours, and policies that come together in an agency, system, or among professionals to enable them to effectively work on cross-cultural issues. The ability of individuals, organizations and systems to function and perform effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Cultural Diversity¹¹

Diversity is a broad term that refers to the variety of differences among people. Often used within the context of culture, education, organizations or workplaces it is used to refer to differences among individuals and groups. Diversity is commonly understood in terms of dimensions that include, but are not limited to race, age, place of origin, religion, ancestry, skin colour, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability/ability, marital, parental or family status, same-sex partnership status, gender identity, creed, educational background, literacy level, geographic location, income level, cultural tradition and work experience.

Discrimination

The manifestation of prejudice. The granting and/or denying of civil liberties and opportunity to individual or groups with respect to access to services, goods and facilities, education, employment, and health care. Discrimination may occur on the basis of age, developmental or mental disability, ethnicity, gender, marital or family status, nationality, physical, race, religious or political affiliation, or sexual orientation. Discrimination becomes more blatant when two or more factors (e.g. economic status, class and/or racial visibility) coincide. This behaviour results in minorities being maltreated/mistreated or excluded.

Dominant Group

Refers to people whose social identity confers on them unearned power and privilege. Most of us have one or more dominant identities. In most parts of Canada, dominant identities are White, male, English-speaking, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian, affluent and middle class, thirty to sixty-five years of age, university educated, from central Canada.¹²

Equality

Treating people the same based on the assumption that everyone is the same and has the same needs.

¹¹ Adapted from *Inclusive Community Organizations: A Tool Kit* (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2004). This definition focuses on what is meant by “diversity” and not on the models/frameworks to address diversity, such as *Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression (ARAO)*; *Cultural Competency*; or *Cultural Sensitivity*

¹² Lopes, Tina and Thomas, Barb, *Dancing on Live Embers Challenging Racism in Organizations*

Equity

Treating people differently based on their different needs in order to ensure their equality of access.

Gender Expression/Gender Presentation¹³

Gender Expression/Gender Presentation describes the external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine such as dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions. People's behaviours that convey something about their gender identity, or that others interpret as meaning something about their gender identity. It is recognized that gender identity and/or gender expression/gender presentation may be fluid and may change over time.

Gender Identity¹⁴

Gender Identity is an individual's own understanding of themselves in terms of being male or female, man or woman, or something other or in-between. An individual's gender identity has nothing to do with their genitalia or chromosomes.

Harassment

The *Ontario Rights Code* defines harassment as a vexatious ("hard to cope with"; "troubling to the nerves or peace of mind") comment or behaviour that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcome. Harassment includes words, actions and/or gestures which are offensive to an individual and which insult, humiliate, demean, and/or undermine a person's worth and dignity.¹⁵

Heterosexism

The belief that heterosexuality is the norm and individual, institutional and systemic results from that belief.

Identity

A subjective sense of coherence, consistency, and continuity of self, based in both personal and group history.

Institutions

Organizational arrangements and practices through which collective actions are taken (e.g. corporations, criminal justice system, education system, health care system, government, religious communities, and others).

¹³ This definition is adapted from The Trans Inclusion Policy of the University of Toronto's Centre for Women and Trans People

¹⁴ This definition is adapted from The Trans Inclusion Policy of the University of Toronto's Centre for Women and Trans People

¹⁵ OAITH, *Creating Inclusive Spaces, Plain Language Version 2000*

Integration

The process that allows groups and persons to become full participating members in the cultural, economic, political and social life of a society while at the same time permitting them to maintain their own cultural identity. This term refers to the renegotiation of a more equitable power sharing equation in the society.

Marginalization

Behaviours, actions, policies, and social institutions that serve to keep various forms of power and privilege away from specific individuals and groups. Denying individuals and groups access to educational, social, legal, and economic resources ensures that they remain “on the margin” or disadvantaged.¹⁶

Oppression

The domination of one individual or group by another, more powerful, individual or group, using cultural, economic, physical, psychological, or social threats or force, and frequently using an explicit ideology to justify the oppression.

Prejudice

A frame of mind that tends to prejudge a person, or a group unfavourably by attributing to every member of a group characteristics falsely attributed to the group as a whole. These unfavourable assumptions are frequently not recognized as such because of the frequency with which they are widely accepted, and are used to justify acts of discrimination.

Privilege

An "unearned advantage" that works "to systematically over-empower certain groups" in our society. Privilege assigns dominance simply based on race, sexuality, or gender, among other factors of identity. Privilege is "an invisible package of unearned assets" that members of privileged groups "can count on cashing in every day," but about which they "are meant to remain oblivious." (Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.")

Race

A category used to classify large groups of people according to common ancestry and reliant on differentiation by distinctive hereditary physical characteristics such as colour of skin and eyes, hair texture, stature, and facial features. These differences and similarities in biological traits are deemed by society to be socially significant, meaning that people treat other people differently because of them. For instance, while differences and similarities in eye color have not been treated as socially significant, differences and similarities in skin color have.

¹⁶ OAITH, *Creating Inclusive Spaces, Plain Language Version 2000*

Racialization

Racial identities are not fixed categories. They are shaped by history, nationality, gender, class, and identity politics, and racial designations often differ from country to country. The term “racialization” makes explicit that this is not about inherent characteristics but about the ways in which we are socialized to differentiate groups of people on the basis of physical characteristics. It emphasizes the active process of categorizing people while at the same time rejecting “race” as a scientific category.¹⁷

Racism

A system in which one group of individual’s exercises power over another group on the basis of skin colour. A set of actions, erroneous assumptions and implicit or explicit beliefs based on an ideology of inherent superiority of one racial group over another. Racism is manifested within organizational and institutional structures and programs as well as within individual thought or behaviour patterns.

Sexism

Any action, attitude, behaviour or language that depicts women as inferior. Sexism is both discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes, and the cultural elements that promote this discrimination.

Social Class

The hierarchical order of a society based on such indicators of social rank as: education, family, income, occupation, ownership of property, etc.

Social Justice

A concept based upon the belief that every individual and group within a given society has a right to civil liberties, equal opportunity, fairness, and participation in the educational, economic, institutional, social and moral freedoms and responsibilities valued by the community.

Systemic Discrimination

The institutionalization of discrimination through policies and practices which have become historically entrenched in systems (systemic), resulting in barriers to equality of opportunity for members of minority groups.

¹⁷ Lopes, Tina and Thomas, Barb, *Dancing on Live Embers Challenging Racism in Organizations*

Transgender¹⁸

Transgender is frequently used as an umbrella term, which serves as a banner to cover all those who transgress society's notions of how biological sex, gender and sexual orientation link together, i.e. anyone who crosses society's gender norms. A transgendered person may feel society is limiting his or her personal expression by maintaining two distinct gender constructs.¹⁹

Travesti (Brasil); Hijra (India); Vestido (Mexico); Binabe (Filipino); Mke-SIMume (Swahili); Katoeys (Thai); Faka Fafini (Polynesian); Transformista (Spanish); A few of the many terms used to describe "trans", or "alternate" gender roles.²⁰

Transphobia

Fear or hatred of Transsexual and Transgender people, as well as those cross gender elements that exist within all people.²¹

Transsexual²²

Transsexuals are individuals whose gender expression or identity is perceived to conflict with the sex assigned to them at birth, and who may or may not begin, or continue the process of hormone replacement therapy and/or gender confirmation surgery. Transsexuals are often described as female-to-male (FTM) i.e. Trans Man, or male-to-female (MTF) i.e. Trans Woman.

Two-Spirit²³

A term, which originates from the First Nations recognition of the traditions and sacredness of people who maintain a balance by housing both the male and female spirit. Today, Two-Spirit people can be Native people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, other gendered, third/fourth gendered individuals that walk carefully between the worlds and between the genders.

White Supremacy

White supremacy is a constructed system that is based on assumptions/messaging and systemically embedded/enshrined beliefs that White people are better than everyone else in the world. The resulting effect is that White people benefit from political, economic and social systems that provide them with more privilege and power than racialized people. Many of us think of the term "White Supremacy" as only being linked to extreme racist group such as the Heritage Front or the KKK. The reality is that wherever there is a social hierarchy (this includes Canada), where white people dominate the power-holding positions, there is white supremacy.

World Majority People

This term emphasizes that racialized people are 70 to 80 percent of the world's population. It links local and national racial equity work to global struggles for racial justice.²⁴

¹⁸ This definition is adapted from The Trans Inclusion Policy of the University of Toronto's Centre for Women and Trans People

¹⁹ The 519 Church Street Community Centre TS/TG 101 by the Meal Trans Programme

²⁰ Creating Inclusive Spaces Provincial Training Series - Information Package

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²² This definition is adapted from The Trans Inclusion Policy of the University of Toronto's Centre for Women and Trans People

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