

Systemic discrimination part 2

What we can do

Module 4 handouts



British Columbia's
**Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner**

Levels of actions

A first step in planning actions to address systemic discrimination involves identifying a level of action. The level of action selected is a personal decision that depends on a number of factors, including capacity, skills, interests and personal safety. This infographic is a useful support for identifying which level of action is most appropriate.



Successful actions guidelines

1. Includes the following key components:

- ☐ Centres the voices of people impacted by the issue
 - Were people impacted by systemic discrimination involved in identifying the issue and developing a response?
- ☐ Addresses the root causes of the issue
 - Are the underlying causes of the issue and not only the impacts addressed?
- ☐ Contributes to systemic and permanent change
 - Will the actions result in permanent changes in attitudes, behaviours, policies or practices within the system where the systemic discrimination occurs?
- ☐ Acknowledges that systemic change may take time
 - Does the plan for action take into account that systemic change often takes time? Does it identify some more easily achievable short-term goals, as well as medium and long-term ones?

2. Considered and developed strategies to overcome the following potential barriers:

- ☐ Limited capacity
 - Will time limitations restrict your ability to carry out the action?
 - Potential solutions: Engage more people in the action or revise the action.
- ☐ Missing skills
 - Are there any tasks that require skills that your group does not possess?
 - Potential solutions: Engage additional people with those skill sets, develop those skills or revise the action.
- ☐ Lack of influence
 - Do you lack access to decision makers who can ensure that changes in policies are implemented?
 - Potential solutions: Engage people with access to decision makers, begin with awareness raising activities to expand your group, or revise the action.
- ☐ Risks to safety or well-being
 - Will participating in the actions pose risks to your safety or well-being?
 - Potential solutions: Expand your team of people acting together or engage allies who are at a lower risk of harm to speak on behalf of the group.



Examples of actions to address systemic discrimination

These are just a few, among many, examples of actions that different groups have taken to address systemic discrimination. We selected these examples to illustrate a wide range of possibilities; they include actions taken by BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner as well as actions that other organizations have taken. BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner does not necessarily endorse any of the actions described in this section.

Personal actions

1. Continue learning about systemic discrimination
 - The learning resources in the Module 5 handouts are a good place to start.
2. Look for systemic discrimination in your organization and community.
 - Handouts in Modules 2 and 3 are useful supports.
3. Practise self-care
 - If you are impacted by systemic discrimination, consider connecting with people impacted similarly and consult the supports in Handout 1.

Awareness-raising

Campaigns led by BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

1. **Let's #RewriteTheRules public awareness campaign**
 Using posters, video, social media posts and local events, the goal of this campaign was to drive conversations about ableism and encourage self-reflection and exploration. The campaign was developed with support from disability representative organizations, including the BC Aboriginal Network on Disability, Disability Alliance of BC, Terrace and District Community Services Society, Third Space Charity and the Victoria Disability Resource Centre. The campaign put emphasis on spaces, systems and attitudes that create barriers for people with disabilities. The campaign invited members of the public to think about how buildings, information, equipment, schedules and ways of doing things can be disabling. Although the campaign ended in the fall of 2022, videos, posters and information about ableism and related human rights laws, as well as examples of actions to address ableism, remain available on the campaign webpage.
2. **"Am I racist?" public awareness campaign**
 BCOHRC's first public awareness campaign was launched in response to a growing incidence and awareness of systemic racism and hate crimes the province. Large black signs with bold, white writing were posted on billboards, transit shelters and buses across



British Columbia. By inviting people to reflect on questions such as, “If I say I don’t see skin colour, am I racist?”, these posters invited people to consider what racism really is and to examine inner biases as initial steps towards contributing to a more anti-racist province. The posters also directed the public to interactive educational activities on the campaign’s webpage.

Campaigns led by other organizations

1. The Moose Hide Campaign

The Moose Hide Campaign began in British Columbia as an Indigenous-led, grassroots movement to engage men and boys in ending violence towards women and children. It has since grown into a nationwide movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians from local communities, First Nations, governments, schools, colleges/universities, police forces and many other organizations – all committed to taking action to end this violence.

2. RISE Against Racism campaign

The First Nations Health Managers Association, in partnership with the First Peoples Wellness Circle and the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation.

Focusing on hospitals, health care providers, health authorities and medical schools, this campaign will work to change problematic biases and perceptions by promoting mutual respect, understanding and empathy toward Indigenous peoples seeking health services. The campaign will include print marketing, a series of television interviews, radio interviews and commercials, as well as public service messaging to communities informing them of available resources.

3. Anti-Racism Community Stewardship program (ARC)

Indigenous Anti-Racism™, Rain Daniels and Chelsea Branch

Training for ARC Stewards who will work together to create educational resources and community workshops that will bring people together to remove systemic barriers and address inequities woven into our society.

4. Gender Equity Learning and Knowledge Exchange

Battered Women’s Support Services

The Gender Equity Learning and Knowledge Exchange is a province-wide community of learning and practice that enables multi-sectoral dialogue, knowledge exchange and mobilization to advance gender equity.

5. Challenging the Ministry of Child and Family Development’s culture of risk and surveillance campaign

West Coast Leaf

This campaign includes information about systemic discrimination within the Ministry of Child and Family Development and provides strategies to take action, including an online petition, letter writing tips and an infographic. This campaign provides an example of how awareness raising can include the promotion of advocacy.

6. Migrant workers sneak secret menus into Canadian restaurants to expose exploitation

Migrant Workers Alliance for Change



This campaign involved plastering QR codes on restaurant menus. The codes linked to a website that provided information about the need for permanent residence status for migrant workers.

Advocacy

Advocacy led by BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

The following are just a few examples of advocacy that BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner has carried out. For more examples, visit our [website](#).

1. **BCOHRC Report: Disaggregated data: Summary of recommendations to prevent harm to communities**

On June 2, 2022, the Anti-Racism Data Act became law in B.C. The Act allows for the collection and use of information to help identify hidden inequalities public services and programs with the goal of dismantling systemic racism. This approach aligns with feedback from Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities who called on government to take a coordinated approach to collecting data so that individuals are not asked to provide the same information multiple times, which can sometimes lead to repeat traumatization. The disaggregated data report—subtitled 'The grandmother perspective'—was a study released by BCOHRC in 2020., which makes the case for the collection data broken down by race, gender, age and other personal characteristics: "We can't know the problem if we can't see it. We cannot act on what we do not know." The grandmother perspective is an approach offered by Gwen Phillips of the Ktunaxa Nation, informed by Indigenous ways of knowing, which emphasizes that government must only collect the information required to nurture communities as it would a family member; to be able to say, as Elders might, "we need to know because we care BCOHRC's report provides recommendations, guided by research and community feedback, that adopt the grandmother perspective to prevent the harms that are sometimes associated with the collection of disaggregated data. BCOHRC is also developing an educational resource to support public sector in understanding the Anti-Racism Data Act and how it applies to their work.

2. **Adding "social condition" as a protected ground to B.C.'s Human Rights Code**

This brief provides an overview of increased instances of discrimination on the basis of social condition within the context of COVID-19. It cites reports and consultations that have documented the extent of this systemic discrimination. The brief centres the voices of low-income people who face this form of discrimination in their every day lives with no access to justice because of the omission of social condition from the list of protected grounds within the B.C. *Human Rights Code*.

3. **BCOHRC Submission to the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act (SCORPA): Equity is safer: Human rights considerations for policing reform in British Columbia**

This report was developed as a submission from BC's Human Rights Commissioner in response to a request from the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act (SCOPA). The reports uses disaggregated demographic data, data which considers information about the identities of different impacted groups, to reveal disturbing racial disparities in



policing in our province. It recommends reforming a range of policing activities in B.C. to reduce systemic racism and improve safety by improving equity.

Advocacy led by other organizations

The following is one of many examples of organizations advocating for systemic change.

1. [Sanctuary City Vancouver: Access without fear in Greater Vancouver – Coast Salish territories](#)

This webpage is operated by Sanctuary Health, a grassroots community group that deploys direct action, movement-building, community-engagement and direct support strategies to advocate for access to services for all regardless of immigration status or documentation.

The webpage supports groups wishing to advocate for sanctuary city policies by sharing the Sanctuary City principles and a list of organizations who have endorsed them, providing recommended actions to advocate for sanctuary cities and sharing additional resources to support actions.

Changing policy in organizations

Policy change efforts led by BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

1. [Employment Equity Toolkit](#)

Employment equity is about employers taking action to remove and prevent barriers for workers who belong to groups that have often been treated unfairly because of their race, age, gender, disability or another characteristic. This toolkit supports employers that want to learn how to improve equity within their businesses and organizations. It begins with introductory materials covering core concepts, summarizing the state of employment equity in B.C. and discussing its business benefits. The rest of the toolkit covers five topic areas within employment equity: accommodations, compensation, data collection, complaint resolution and hiring and promotion. Each topic is covered in an info-sheet containing recommendations for employers. These are sometimes supplemented with additional guidance and tools that allow for deeper exploration of one or more aspects of the topic.

2. [Special programs](#)

“Special programs” are programs adopted by an employer or other service provider that aim to improve the conditions for an individual or group that has faced a disadvantage. For more information, visit the Special Programs page on the BCOHRC website at <https://bchumanrights.ca/human-rights/special-programs>

Policy changes undertaken by other organizations

1. [BC Teachers' Federation equity and inclusion initiatives](#)

The BCTF has developed a [number of initiatives](#) to improve equity and inclusion within the union and its locals. Current strategies include a [review of systemic racism](#), dedicated staff focused on equity and inclusion, dedicated executive committee positions for members from equity-deserving groups and a [BC Teachers' Federation Equity and](#)



[inclusion grant](#) aimed at supporting local teachers' unions with improving equity within their policies and practices.

2. **Commitment to Anti-Racism, Equity & Inclusion** – Calgary Police Service

This report was developed in response to the June 15, 2020 Notice of Motion from Calgary City Council, calling on “the Calgary Police Commission to report to Council as soon as possible, on the anti-racism work currently underway and contemplated within the Calgary Police Service and any plans for engaging in a broader conversation with the community on the future of policing in a diverse city.” It provides details of Calgary Police Commission’s commitment to addressing systemic racism through policy change resulting in both immediate and long-term actions.

3. **Gender neutral language** – BC Government

In this March 2022 news release, the provincial government announced its intentions to remove almost 750 instances of gendered language across 16 ministries in order to remove barriers to accessing services.

Legal action

1. **Filing a complaint with [BC Human Rights Tribunal](#)**

British Columbians who believe that they have experienced systemic discrimination based on one of the protected characteristics under B.C.’s [Human Rights Code](#), can file a complaint with B.C.’s Human Rights Tribunal. B.C.’s *Human Rights Code* governs relationships between organizations and individuals in the areas of employment, housing, services, publications and membership in associations. If the Tribunal rules that systemic discrimination occurred, it may call for a systemic remedy, which could include ordering the employer, service or housing provider to institute policies, procedures and training designed to prevent the discrimination from continuing. [BC Human Rights Clinic](#) can offer support in filing a complaint. BCOHRC offers regular webinars on British Columbian’s rights and responsibilities under BC’s *Human Rights Code*.

2. **Filing a complaint with the [Canadian Human Rights Tribunal](#)**

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* governs federally regulated organizations, such as banks and airlines. Complaints related to systemic discrimination occurring in areas covered by the *Canadian Human Rights Act* can be filed with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

3. **Launching a Constitutional challenge**

A constitutional challenge can be launched in cases of potential systemic discrimination in areas covered by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Charter governs relationships between governments and individuals, and covers civil and political rights, such as the right to equality and freedom of speech. Constitutional challenges take place in Canadian courts. An example is the Centre for Family Equity (formerly Single Mothers’ Alliance) constitutional challenge against the Province of B.C. supported by West Coast LEAF. This case alleges that the province has a constitutional responsibility to provide access to the justice system for women fleeing violent relationships or dealing with ongoing situations of abuse from ex-spouses. As it is now, the legal aid scheme discriminates against women and children and violates their rights by putting them at further risk of violence and intense stress.



4. Filing a complaint with an international human rights body

When potential systemic discrimination occurs in areas covered by international human rights law, a complaint can be filed with an international human rights body. This type of complaint is less common. Decisions are not binding unless supported by Canadian laws.

Less formal pathways are also available for groups to submit concerns about systemic discrimination to the United Nations. For example Hereditary Chief Dini ze' Woos (Frank Alec), Gidimt'en Checkpoint Spokesperson and Wing Chief of the Cas Yikh House, Sleydo' (Molly Wickham) and Gidimt'en Checkpoint Media Coordinator Jen Wickham informed the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination about [potential systemic discrimination](#) occurring during construction of the Trans Mountain and Coastal Gas Link pipelines. This information included the escalation of force against Indigenous land defenders and the failure of Canadian and provincial governments to engage in consultations with these Nations. This UN committee responses included this [letter](#) to the Canadian government.

