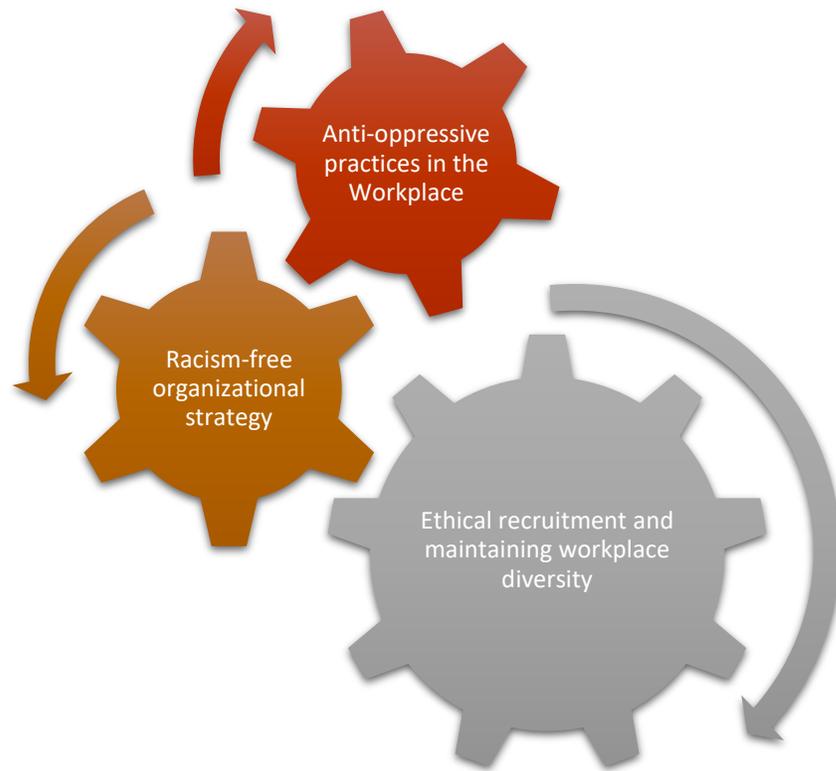


## Workplace Anti-racism Resource

Building racism-free workplaces in Saskatoon



*A brief guide for identifying and addressing racism in the workplace*

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# 1. Introduction

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Canada is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world and multiculturalism brings great benefits to its economy and growth. However, multiculturalism comes with its challenges, one of which is racism. Although racism appears to have been reduced from the big issue it once was, it still exists. Racism is like a virus; it mutates and changes form to survive and be less detectable. For this reason, it must be fought actively.

In the past, racism was more overt, visual, and physical, but today, racism and racial tendencies are more subtle and discrete in form. In the workplace, racism can take many forms from an employer not respecting an employee's religious or cultural holidays to unethical hiring practices including alienation of certain individuals from equitable employment for reasons not associated with ability to perform in the job role.

Whether verbal, visual, physical, or psychological, racism must be addressed and combated actively in the workplace from an anti-discrimination and social justice imperative (Hiranandani 2012). This resource focuses on racism in the workplace, provides toolkits for assessing racism, and offers recommendations to help combat racism in the workplace.

## 1.1 What is Racism?

Racism is a combination of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination that makes some people think they are superior to people of other ancestries.<sup>1</sup> Racism can be a conscious or unconscious attitude based on an assumption about characteristics of a particular group or religion. It is a hurtful behaviour that attacks an individual's dignity.

Racism exists between individuals, on an interpersonal level and is embedded in institutions and organizations through their policies, practices, and procedures. The forms of racism are:

- a. Individual racism: this is when a person believes that they are superior to others because of their ethnic background or the colour of their skin.
- b. Institutional racism: can be defined as the distribution of opportunities, resources, and power to the benefit of persons in a dominant group and to the exclusion of persons of visible minorities. It can also be the lack of access into the workforce or opportunities of higher professional positions that minority groups face.
- c. Microaggressions: Racism in the workplace can be expressed as microaggressions. "Microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or

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<sup>1</sup> Information Sheet on Erasing Racism by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward individuals from marginalized communities.” (Ramirez, Chou, et al. 2018). Microaggressions are the new form of racism, and they are more challenging to identify because they are more subtle than other forms of racism.

## 1.2 Why is racism an issue?

Having to work in an environment of overt or covert discrimination can cause employees to suffer a range of physical and mental health problems. Racism may prevent the organization from growing exponentially as it places barriers on employees’ productivity. Under the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code 2018, it is unlawful for any employer to discriminate against an employee based on race or perceived race, colour, ancestry, nationality, or place of origin.

## 1.3 Does racism exist in the workplace in Canada?

For members of visible minorities, this question might be an obvious yes; however, for members of the dominant group, the existence of racism in the workplace might go unnoticed. The Employment Equity Act<sup>2</sup> defines members of visible minorities as persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race, non-white in colour.

According to Hiranandani (2012) and The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (2018):

- Visible minorities, when compared to non-visible minorities, have poorer labour market outcomes, employment, representation in better-paying jobs, access to job opportunities, upward mobility, earnings, and income;
- Among sixty-nine medium and large companies, only 3% have a visible minority CEO, and only 3% of about 900 senior executives are visible minorities.
- In addition to barriers in the hiring process, several research studies have shown that North American organizational culture, with its everyday discrimination, is the main reason for high turnover among visible minorities.
- In the Ethnic Diversity Survey, Statistics Canada found that 56% of participants who perceived discrimination or unfair treatment identified that they mostly encountered such treatment in the workplace, particularly during job applications and promotions.

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<sup>2</sup> (1995, c.44 ,s.3)



- The report by Conference Board of Canada suggests that the propensity for sameness, preservation of status quo, and underlying racism lead employers to often cite “lack of fit” as the rationale for not hiring or promoting skilled minority candidates.
- 35% of Muslims in Canada have experienced discrimination in the past five years, mostly in the workplace because of their religion, ethnicity/culture, language, or sex.
- Additional employment barriers cited in the Conference Board of Canada’s report include speaking with an accent, having foreign-sounding names, unfamiliarity with Canadian mores, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, and higher performance expectations for minority candidates.
- The Canadian Human Rights Commission reported that race-based complaints represent 36% of all claims filed under Canada’s Human Rights Act. The workplace is the most common location where racism is experienced.

## 1.4 Benefits of a culturally diverse workforce

Maintaining a culturally diverse workforce is not only crucial for the Canadian economy but is also important for the growth of organizations and businesses. The benefits of having a diverse workforce include:

- **Increased creativity:** Employees from different cultural backgrounds are more likely to have different experiences, perspectives, and skill sets. This brings creativity to the workplace and a greater ability to have a more diverse set of solutions to problems. Creativity also drives innovation.
- **Improved employee engagement:** Having a culturally diverse workplace may improve employees’ engagement and interactions with themselves and help them learn about different cultural backgrounds.
- **Workplace attractiveness:** Diversity in the workplace boosts the organization’s reputation and makes it more attractive to the public.
- **Reduced employee turnover:** Diversity and inclusion in a workplace make employees feel valued and accepted. Employees who feel accepted in a workplace are less likely to desire to leave the organization.

## 2. Recognizing and addressing racism in the workplace

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Premised upon the realization that the first step to solving any problem is acknowledging there is one, employers, employees, and all stakeholders within an organization need to be open to recognizing and addressing racism in the workplace.

There are several steps and processes towards addressing individual (personal) and institutional (organizational) racism. Below is a set of assessment tool kits:

### 2.1 Personal assessment

The below assessment toolkit provides an employee with a step-by-step process for assessing their own beliefs and views about racism and determine whether they have been participating in any unconscious bias and racist behaviour.

For each statement in the table below, please choose one of the following:

- i. **A: Accomplished**
- ii. **CTA: Currently Taking Actions** on the matter
- iii. **PC: Planification and Conversations** have started
- iv. **NS: Not Sure**
- v. **N: No**

I am honest about the limits of my understanding of different cultures	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I respect other people’s cultures and ask questions about aspects of their culture that I do not understand	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I ask questions to understand the personal lived reality and experiences of others	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I review my organization’s policies, resources, and posters regularly for inclusivity and appropriate language	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I share positive images and posters of ethnic and culturally diverse people online	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I am comfortable working with co-workers from different ethnicities and cultures	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I would feel comfortable if my manager or supervisor were from a different ethnicity or culture	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I understand how racism, racist behaviours, and microaggressions affect people of minority groups, and have negative impact on the productivity and effectiveness of employees in the workplace	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I evaluate my attitudes and behavioural practices for discriminatory tendencies	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I appreciate and am receptive of multiculturalism and diversity	A	CTA	PC	NS	N



I recognize that a person’s appearance, actions, or words may not be reflective of that person’s culture, nationality, race, or ethnicity. I avoid making assumptions based on these characteristics	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I monitor my thoughts and opinions when I see someone doing things in a different way	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I understand that people may engage in different cultures and activities that are not consistent with my own culture	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I monitor my values and language for generalizations regarding race, culture, and ethnicity	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I am aware of the government laws and organizational policies concerning race, culture, and ethnicity	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I am aware that an individual’s experience of racism may not be representative of the general experience of their group, race, or creed	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I advocate for anti-discrimination policies especially as it relates to ethno-racial minorities	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I encourage education and increased knowledge about different cultures and ethnicities in my workplace	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I care about safeguarding the rights of ethno-racial minorities	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I confront statements or jokes that discriminate or make fun of ethno-racial minorities regardless of the status or rank of the person involved	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I do not act overly friendly to a person of another race to make sure I do not seem biased; I treat everybody equally and with respect	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I do not have uncomfortable thoughts about a person’s race, even if I do not verbalize them	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I do not make judgements about a person’s preferences based solely on their race or ethnicity	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I do not assume that one characteristic of a minority person defines the characteristics of the entire minority group	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I do not behave differently when I become aware of a person’s race	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
I am aware of the prejudices that might have been created in me towards ethno-racial minorities due to social conditioning, and I work everyday towards eliminating them	A	CTA	PC	NS	N

Having completed the above personal assessment outcomes, the below actions can be considered towards improving and/or maintaining your values, attitude, and beliefs:

- i. A – accomplished: focus on how you can maintain that status.
- ii. CTA – currently taking actions on the matter: focus on ways on how you can improve and get that last mile to accomplish the goal.
- iii. PC – planification and conversations have started: Less thinking and planning and more action. Chances are that you already have a good idea on how to act on the matter. Focus your attention on how you will take the first step towards attaining the goal.
- iv. NS – Not sure: focus on learning more about this area and how you could act on it.
- v. N – No: focus on planning a strategy on how you would address and tackle the goal.

## 2.2 Interpersonal assessment

Upon completion of the individual (personal) assessment and having identified areas requiring improvements, the next important step is to evaluate the level of interpersonal relations within an organization vis-à-vis the management and staff, the staff and management.

The below interpersonal assessment toolkit is recommended for the assessment of interpersonal relations within an organization:

The Board and management have deepened knowledge about issues of self-privilege within the organization	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The Board and management have values-based relationship with persons of Minority groups within the organization	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
Persons of Minority groups within the organization are supported in identifying and participating in leadership opportunities	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The management and staff have the resources and structure to discuss and respond to issues of racism, harassment, and microaggressions within the organization	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
Identities of persons of Minority groups (immigration status, gender, age, languages spoken, etc.) are recognized, respected, and take into consideration in the development of organizational culture	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The Board, management, and staff receive regular training on anti-racism and anti-oppressive practices in the workplace	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
Persons of Minority groups occupy leadership positions within the organization e.g. Board member, management, supervisor, etc	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The dominant culture is not accepted as the norm and persons of minority groups within the organization are not expected/required to assimilate into the existing dominant organizational culture	A	CTA	PC	NS	N

## 2.3 Organization assessment

Another important process for creating a racism-free workplace is to assess the organization’s mandate and policies.

The below assessments tool is valuable for examining an organization’s policies, procedures, and mandate in relation to advancing inclusion and equitable opportunity among its employees:

The organization analyzes the comprehensive needs of persons of Minority groups among its staff	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The organization sets goals for racial justice across its program areas that seek to name and address racial disparities and harms	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The organization has metrics, benchmarks, and indicators for measuring its success in eradicating racism and harassment	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The organization has authentic and accountable relationships with multicultural individuals and other stakeholders providing input to its programs	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
Benchmarks about racial justice are incorporated into the annual evaluation for the management and all employees	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The organization seeks to include persons of Minority groups in its leadership and decision-making processes	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The organization provides adequate resources for its racial justice work	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The organization adopts anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive policies that prohibit racism and microaggressions against persons of Minority groups within its staff	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The organization follows the principles of employment equity in its hiring processes	A	CTA	PC	NS	N
The organization periodically assesses whether its policies and procedures have a disproportionate impact on its employment	A	CTA	PC	NS	N

## 2.4 Additional Organizational Assessment Resources

Additional resources for assessing organizational performance on race relations and how to create positive space for ethno-racial minorities in the workplace:

- i. Assessing Your Organization’s Readiness and Capacity to Move a Racial Justice Agenda: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/westernstates3.pdf>
- ii. Assessing Organizational Racism: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/westernstates2.pdf>
- iii. Racial Justice Assessment Tool: [http://www.nijn.org/uploads/digital-library/AssessingOurOrganizations\\_RacialJustice%20\(1\)%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.nijn.org/uploads/digital-library/AssessingOurOrganizations_RacialJustice%20(1)%20(1).pdf)

### 3. Creating Cultural Competency and Support Training in the Workplace

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Understanding cultural competency is integral to achieving organizational success within the framework of diversity and inclusion. Cultural competency is the ability to interact and effectively communicate with persons across cultures through positive behaviours, attitudes, and policies.

This section focuses on laws, policies, and strategies necessary for creating a racism-free workplace to combat dominant privilege, power disparities, and other forms of inequity within an organization.

#### 3.1 The Canadian Multiculturalism Act

The efforts of the Government of Canada in fostering social participation and inclusion must be appreciated when developing organizational core values, goals, objectives, and policies. Under the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, it is declared to be the policy of Canada:

- i. to recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;
- ii. to promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation;
- iii. to ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity;
- iv. to promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins;
- v. to preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada;
- vi. that all federal institutions ensure that Canadians of all origins have an equal opportunity to obtain employment and advancement in those institutions;
- vii. that all federal institutions collect statistical data in to enable the development of policies, programs and practices that are responsive to multiculturalism.

#### 3.2 Employment Equity Act

The purpose of this Act is to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person is denied employment benefits or opportunities for reasons unrelated to ability and in the fulfillment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment. The four [4] groups designated for employment equity continue to be (i) women, (ii) Indigenous peoples, (iii) persons with disabilities, and (iv) members of visible minority groups.

Employers are obligated to ensure that the representation of persons in the designated groups is reflected in their workforce, or, in segments of the workforce that the employer would reasonably draw upon for staffing purposes. A 'segment of the workforce' might be defined by criteria such as qualification, eligibility, or geographical location.

To meet these obligations, every employer is required to:

- i. conduct an analysis of its workforce to ascertain representation;
- ii. review employment systems, policies and practices to identify and eliminate barriers against designated groups;
- iii. undertake policies and programs to correct under-representation and provide for reasonable accommodation of differences in the workplace;
- iv. prepare a plan with qualitative and numerical goals as well as activities and timetables for achieving them;
- v. inform employees of the purposes of employment equity, the key measures for implementing employment equity and progress achieved; and
- vi. consult with its employees' representatives on implementing employment equity and communicating to employees on related matters. There is also a duty on both parties to consult and collaborate on developing the employment equity plan as well as implementing and revising it.

### 3.3 Step-By-Step Strategy: TAYFFI Recommendations

Organizations must be intentional about combating racism in all its forms. A welcoming workplace is achieved when organization pay attention to their operational activities and public notice such as:

#### 1. Signage & Infrastructure

- i. promotions/campaign poster to represent diverse target audience
- ii. advertisement/publicity images should represent diverse ethnicities
- iii. positive affirming statements should be displayed e.g. "Diversity works here"

#### 2. Resources

- i. documents such as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, the Employment Equity Act, the Cultural Diversity and Race Relationship Policy of the City of Saskatoon, etc. should be available in organizations
- ii. educational materials on cultural competency should be available to employees

### 3. Policy and Procedures

- i. organizations should develop an anti-discrimination policy and should make this available to all employees
- ii. programs and activities within the organization should focus on serving a diverse community
- iii. anti-racism/race-equity seminars and training should be incorporated into employee professional development
- iv. establish a channel for receiving complaints and feedback in relation to ethical conducts among employees within an organization
- v. ensure all stakeholders within an organization are consulted and represented when developing internal policies and procedures

### 4. Programming

- i. collaborate or partner with organizations offering programs on cross-cultural learning and social participation
- ii. ensure that Board, management, and staff receive regular education on intercultural training, cross-cultural communications, diversity management, and anti-racism

## 3.4 Key Considerations

- i. Information dissemination should be clear, consistent, and impartial
- ii. Avoid sweeping generalization and/or one-size-fits-all approach when addressing issues on cultures, traditions, beliefs, and values different from the popular views
- iii. Be aware of informed-bias, personal assumptions, and stereotypes
- iv. Recognize that cultures have unique understandings and different concepts that may not match up with Western definitions
- v. Be aware that culture of a person does not generally determine their way of speaking and communicating with others
- vi. Consider what procedure to adopt when a person requires assistance in communicating or recording what is intended to be an anonymous feedback

### Accountability

- How are incidents addressed?
- How are injured parties supported in healing, safety, and access to justice?
- How are offending parties encouraged in learning and growing?
- How are similar incidents prevented from happening again?
- Who is responsible?

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