



## **Anti-Racism Framework at Elmwood Community Resource Centre**

### **Racism Defined**

Race is a socially constructed term used to describe groups of people based on their skin colour. Racism or racialization can be defined as “encompassing economic, political, social, and cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that systematize and perpetuate and unequal distribution of privileges, resources between white people and people of colour” (DiAngelo, 2011). Racism can be described with a spectrum ideology, going from subtle forms of discrimination to explicit discrimination (Corneau & Stergiopoulos, 2012). There are three main forms of racism individual, institutional, and cultural racism (Corneau & Stergiopoulos, 2012). Individual is defined by prejudicial behaviour toward racial groups, institutional is where racism is legitimized through social exclusion within social institutions, and cultural racism is the values and beliefs engraved in our common sense, which embraces white culture over others (Corneau & Stergiopoulos, 2012). Systemic racism is often due to hidden biases in policies, practices, and processes that aim to privilege certain groups of people and disadvantage the rest of society (Government of Canada, 2017). Racialization not only focuses on skin colour discrimination, characteristics such as culture, language, customs, ancestry or religion can be used to ‘other’ individuals and groups (Government of Canada, 2017).

### **Anti-Racism Framework**

The anti-racism framework involves the retaliation against practices and behaviours within the individual, cultural, and institutional sectors in society that embody racism (Government of Ontario, 2017; Corneau & Stergiopoulos, 2012). As a part of retaliation, constant monitoring and assessment of policies and programs are required to ensure they promote equality for everyone (Government of Canada, 2017). This framework differs from the



multicultural or cultural competence frameworks, the anti-racism principles encourage service workers to acknowledge that racism runs deep into systems and maintains power struggles between groups through societal structures (Government of Ontario, 2017).

### **Six Principles of the Anti-Racism Framework (Corneau & Stergiopoulos, 2012)**

#### ***Empowerment***

From a strengths-based perspective, racialized groups have their own strengths, including supportive families, spiritual practices, and belief systems. To empower is to help individuals/families gain more control over their lives, by meeting their needs, revealing their voices, and providing with the tools to allow them to have a strong and positive identity. Another component of empowerment is allowing community members to have input in the programs and services they are receiving. Staff create plans in correlation with service users to best fit their cultural systems. ECRC staff also empowers service users by building capacity to increase individual's knowledge and resources needed to make changes within their own lives and within the community.

#### ***Education***

Education about race, racism, and white privilege are vital in the anti-racism framework. Staff at ECRC create awareness around social inequities, by delivering targeted programming, and raising awareness through social media post. Within the Strength to Be (STB) program youth are taught about the systemic and interpersonal forms of racism. Youth are also taught about how to make a change by not accepting racism and fighting back for equality for all.

#### ***Building Alliances***

Building community partnerships and coalitions with oppressed groups is important in changing perceptions, racist discourses and practices at individual, institutional, and cultural levels. At ECRC staff reflect the population they serve, the agency represent the diverse population we



serve from the board level who share their input based on the community they represent. Within the Indigenous Traditional parenting program lessons are taught by an Indigenous person, and within the NISW program the NISW workers share similar experiences to the families they are working with.

### ***Language***

To work from an anti-racism perspective, language that does not stigmatize or recreate oppressive forms of power is vital. The ability to develop strong relationship and connection is crucial to eliminating barriers and distance between service users and staff. At ECRC staff can relate to service users, whether through culture or life experiences, this often allows staff to see things from the service user's perspective. Within programming staff are also aware of what language they use to ensure that they are not being degrading or excluding. For example, in the counselling intake form, questions are inclusive and worded in a respectful matter to take into consideration how intake questions may negatively or positively impact service users.

### ***Advocacy, social justice/activism***

Advocacy focuses on allowing individuals to make free and informed choices. Advocacy consists of three main components, advising, assisting, and supporting. Within the anti-racism framework, advocacy for minority populations who are marginalized and oppressed is crucial. At ECRC community members are always encouraged to make their own decision, while the staff informs them of their choices. For example, ECRC's counselling programs work from a person-centered approach, community members are guided to determine their own decisions. Working from this perspective allows community to tap into their existing capacity for self-actualization. If service users cannot advocate on their own, ECRC staff are there to support them through any advocacy process, if not they are referred to another agency that can advocate on the service users behalf.



### *Fostering reflexivity*

Self-awareness and examination are essential in understanding the role one has in society's oppressive system. It is important to note that without individual change, institutional, and cultural changes become harder to achieve, therefore, one's social location and position is necessary in pursuing social justice and inclusion. ECRC attend training workshops on inclusivity, anti-racism, cultural competency, and much more. These workshops allow staff to constantly update their work practices, ethics, and self-awareness in order to better serve service users. ECRC staff also attend weekly debrief meetings to share information and resources with one another. Within debrief meetings staffs are often confronted with any of their possible biases they present within practice and they are given different perspectives from their co-workers.

Contact us at [program@elmwoodcrc.ca](mailto:program@elmwoodcrc.ca) or 204-982-1720 ext 210 / check out our website for more information and resources at [www.elmwoodcrc.ca](http://www.elmwoodcrc.ca)

### References

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