



Ontario Public Health Association

l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario

Established/Établi 1949

**Position Statement and
Resolution on Anti-Racism
for
Consideration at OPHA's
October 26, 2020
Annual General Meeting**

Submitted by OPHA's Anti-Racism Task Group

Overview:

Systemic racism is a public health issue that is embedded within society and its institutions. It interacts with and amplifies every determinant of health, law and policy creating barriers for racialized groups and Indigenous peoples to attain education, access to employment, fair compensation, housing and appropriate unbiased health care. These inequities result in worse health outcomes for those who experience racism - for example, [higher rates of chronic health conditions, communicable diseases, mental health challenges](#) and earlier death. As such, public health professionals play a critical role in mitigating the manifestations of systemic racism within our society and advocating against this form of oppression.

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) acknowledges the role of public health in perpetuating and reinforcing racism within its systems. Traditionally, healthcare and public health have existed in a separate sphere from activism and racial justice. As a sector, public health has expressed the importance of recognizing racism as a determinant of health but has shown little progress in creating comprehensive and systemic change to address this issue. Racism and other intersectional forms of discrimination are human rights issues, whereby people's lives are politicized based on personal characteristics they cannot change.

Conversations about anti-Black racism have once again been brought to the forefront following instances of police violence in the United States involving George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, Jacob Blake, and countless others. While typically viewed as an American problem, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and police violence are issues that are pervasive within Canadian society as well. This is evidenced by the police killings of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, D'Andre Campbell, Chantel Moore, Rodney Levi, and countless others. It is important to recognize that racism goes beyond outward displays such as police violence - it is embedded within every aspect of our systems and works to prevent Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) from achieving the same quality of life as White people.

Responding as an Association

In response to current conversations about anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, the OPHA created the Anti-Racism Task Group in June 2020. The purpose of this group is to work towards dismantling systems of oppression in order to advance the health and wellbeing of BIPOC, now and in the future. To date, some of the activities that the Task Group has undertaken include:

- Creating and distributing an infographic on protesting safely during COVID-19
- Created a Defunding Police Subcommittee, which has:
 - (1) supported the June 2020 Toronto City Council motion to defund the Toronto Police Service by 10%;
 - (2) submitted a letter to the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General condemning the government's hiring of 200 new OPP officers;

- (3) engaged in advocacy work regarding defunding the police (e.g. drafting and distributing a position paper to advocate for the divestment of police funding to health and social services);
- Seeking collaboration/partnerships from organizations across Ontario that are focused on social justice, anti-racism, and health equity
- Developing a web page/social media presence for the Task Group to further advance online advocacy efforts; and
- Advising on the OPHA ‘MakeItBetter’ campaign to highlight the link between climate change and racial justice

Despite the continuing efforts of the Anti-Racism Task Group, the OPHA recognizes that this is only one step towards achieving health equity, and that much more needs to be done to combat systemic racism in concrete ways. Statements that condemn racism can often feel like empty promises that replace real progress, which is why the OPHA is dedicated to moving beyond performative activism and supporting true change within the public health sector and beyond.

Resources to Support Action:

[Ontario Public Health Standards - Health Equity Guideline, 2018](#)

[The National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health - Webinars on Racism, Anti-Racism and Racial Equity](#)

[The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - Calls to Action](#)

[Black Lives Matter - Canada](#)

[CIARS Town Hall | Rising up During Covid-19: Solidarity, Anti-Black Racism and Health](#)

[Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion \(CCDI\) Toolkits on Leadership in Diversity & Inclusion](#)

[Race Forward - Racial Equity Impact Assessment](#)

[Wellesley Institute - Sociodemographic Data and Equity in Health Services in Ontario](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Commission - Collecting Human Rights-Based Data](#)

[Race Forward - What is Systemic Racism? Video Series](#)

[Info Sheet: Sany’as Training in Ontario](#)

[Sany’as Ontario Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program](#)

[Our Health Counts Toronto: using respondent-driven sampling to unmask census undercounts of an urban indigenous population in Toronto, Canada](#)

[Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre: Our Health Counts Report](#)

[Well Living House: Justice for Joyce Echaquan – Additional Resources](#)

[FrameWorks Institute - Framing 101](#)

Resolution for Consideration by OPHA’s Membership

Whereas the mission of OPHA is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public’s health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario, the OPHA recognizes the negative impact that systemic racism has on people’s health and wellbeing.

Whereas OPHA’s membership has adopted earlier resolutions that committed the organization to reducing health disparities by applying a health equity lens and responding to the Truth and Reconciliation’s Calls to Action.

Whereas OPHA is committed to stand in solidarity and support of those working to dismantle racism and anti-Indigenous racism, and recognizes that as an organization we need to do more to educate ourselves and check our privilege; silence is not acceptable and change only happens when we stand up and speak out.

Whereas OPHA has created an Anti-Racism Task Group of interested members to guide its approach and work in this area.

Be it resolved that OPHA adopt this position statement developed by its Anti-Racism Task Group.

Be it further resolved that OPHA incorporate and apply an anti-racism and anti-Indigenous racism lens in its planning, implementation, and evaluation of all program(s), activities, and policies and adopt organizational language that reflects anti-racist values and avoids stigmatizing or homogenizing BIPOC and their struggles, particularly for Black and Indigenous people.

Be it further resolved that OPHA embark on an anti-racism action plan, based on the principles set out in this position statement, in collaboration with its Anti-Racism Task Group, to guide its work in tackling systemic racism; the action plan is to include a commitment to continuous learning and knowledge-seeking in regards to racism in public health and beyond, rather than exclusively relying on BIPOC as an educative source.

Be it further resolved that OPHA create and adopt a resolution which commits the organization to reducing health disparities by responding to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Calls to Justice.

Be it further resolved that OPHA advocate to the Ontario Government and other public health agencies to:

- apply a racial equity and Indigenous equity lens across all public health projects and programs, not only for those that explicitly tackle anti-racism and anti-Indigenous racism, and to continue to promote and support the use of an anti-racism and anti-Indigenous racism lens in other parts of the health system;
- Increase funding, resources, and fair compensation for anti-racism and anti-Indigenous racism work in public health, including job positions, committees, and anti-racism/anti-Indigenous racism/anti-oppression training;
- Develop its capacity to translate and apply anti-racism and anti-Indigenous racism research/knowledge gathering activities in ways that will improve the health of racialized and Indigenous people; and
- Implement equitable hiring practices, foster culturally safe workplaces, and create diverse staff teams that reflect the communities they serve.