

POLICY 172: Anti-Racism and Cultural Safety

Racism exists. It has existed historically and continues to be embedded within cultures, communities and in individuals. It has deeply harmed countless people and communities. It has been operationalized in all systems, including systems of education. Settlers have benefited from these systems of exclusion, so learning about how systems discriminate and exclude through existing rules and procedures is also essential. Sometimes these are easily identified, and sometimes they are not, they can be hidden or less obvious. An ongoing commitment to actively review and then enact processes that are inclusive is essential. The Board of Education of School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) (“The Board”) commits to eliminating racism in all of its forms.

The Board is committed to becoming anti-racist and to working with its communities to ensure all identities are valued and that all learners and members of the school district community feel safe, included, and welcome. The Board is committed to cultural humility—a way of humbly acknowledging a need to listen and learn about each other’s experiences—and to take actions that honour the wisdom and experiences of its diverse communities. The Board will also authentically and purposefully respond to the calls for action and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Anti-racism work is liberatory and makes communities richer, safer, and enables connections for everyone in a globally interconnected world.

The Board recognizes that some students, staff, and school community members experience racism by virtue of visible and less visible perceived differences in race, skin colour, ancestry, ethnicity and/or culture, including Indigenous peoples. It also recognizes that racism and stereotyping is harmful to everyone in the educational community, and requires a deep, shared commitment with persistent, ongoing actions to dismantle its effects.

Racism presents itself in many forms. The racism of low expectations has been identified as a pattern in BC schools, where Indigenous children/learners are assumed to need remediation or extra help because of their culture or family practices. It also exists in systems—such as assigning all children of colour into an English as a second language class. Racism isn’t always intentional, but it always harms.

The Board recognizes its obligations in the context of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the BC Human Rights Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), and the BC Multiculturalism Act and accepts its responsibility to live to the spirit and intentions of these legislative tools.

Apology and Recognition of Harm

The Board recognizes its current and historical role in discriminating against peoples on the basis of their race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, or criminal conviction¹. In particular, it recognizes that education has been an instrument of significant harm to Indigenous peoples.

¹ Grounds for protection against discrimination are fully described in the BC and Canadian Human Rights Code; they are abbreviated here.

Related Legislation: [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), [BC Human Rights Code](#), [Canadian Human Rights Act](#), [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#), [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act \(DRIPA\)](#), [Multiculturalism Act](#)

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As a Board we apologize for our complicity with these discriminatory practices, acknowledge the significant and ongoing harm experienced as a result by members of Indigenous, Black, Persons of Colour and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two Spirit (IBPOCQ2+) communities, and commit to leading and empowering all members of our communities in ensuring we create inclusive, safe, and welcoming spaces for all. The Board of Education commits to addressing all educational recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and to the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA BC Implementation Plan).

Board of Education of School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) Commitments:

The Board commits to championing anti-racism and leading courageous conversations in order to end racism, marginalization, bias, and exclusion by incorporating the following principles, values, and actions:

1. Celebrating, recognizing, and honouring all diverse identities as a means of instilling pride in all who are a part of the school district community.
2. Ensuring equity for all by identifying and removing barriers of exclusion, overcoming implicit and explicit bias, creating anti-racist, inclusive programming and creating cultures of belonging in every school and worksite in the district.
3. Ensuring trauma-informed practices, reconciliation, cultural humility, and restorative justice are core features of all approaches to personal and collective forms of learning about anti-racism. These practices will be focused on opportunities to learn and grow rather than punishment or shame.
4. Learning about racism, in the past and present, and engaging in future focused efforts, including righting past wrongs.
5. Ensuring that education resources honour the diverse understandings people may have.
6. Ensuring accessible and inclusive language, resources, tools, and spaces for diverse audiences, including students, parents, and community members.
7. Honouring and acknowledging the wisdom and experiences of IBPOCQ2+ community members as partners in our anti-racism work, without relying on their unpaid labour to benefit those with privilege.
8. Ensuring commitments to reconciliation and Indigenization are incorporated into our shared responsibilities and accountabilities.
9. Ensuring that cultural competencies, diverse knowledges, and ways of being are embedded within activities undertaken to support this anti-racism policy.
10. Ensuring accountability and measures of success in implementing this policy are developed and fully integrated into ongoing public reporting mechanisms.
11. Ensuring diverse communities and organizations are included in formal and informal district deliberations and processes of consultation and recognized as collaborators in building equitable and inclusive education.

Definitions/Glossary

At the time of its initial adoption, the terminology and language used in this policy were considered acceptable by most. As much as possible, the following definitions seek to provide clear and basic understandings of ideas included in this policy document. It is recognized that language changes with time, and therefore this policy should be regularly reviewed, and its terms and definitions revised as appropriate.

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Please note that definitions are grouped and not necessarily in alphabetical order.

Anti-racism - Actions to end racism and to commit to learning about how to be non-discriminatory to all persons and groups. It also means committing to ongoing education and learning that requires thinking frequently about our assumptions and beliefs and how these create barriers to inclusion.

Racism - The belief that different races possess distinct abilities, qualities, or features that make them inferior or superior to one another.

White Supremacy - White supremacy is the belief that white people are superior to all others and should therefore dominate or control how society and systems operate. It gives a structural and social advantage to white people and communities.

Systemic Racism - Racism that is embedded within organizational structures, processes, procedures, or ideas that perpetuates inequalities for racial minorities or those with non-dominant identities. This form of racism is organized and persistently maintains racial advantage for some dominant cultures.

Anti-Indigenous Racism - Anti-Indigenous racism is ongoing race-based discrimination or injustice experienced by Indigenous Peoples. It includes practices or ways of thinking that maintain and perpetuate power imbalances, inequitable outcomes, and systemic barriers.

Unintentional Racism - These are racist acts that are reflected in unquestioned personal assumptions or beliefs; often they happen as a part of everyday actions. They are not intentionally understood by the perpetrator to be racist.

Racism of Low Expectations - The Auditor General of British Columbia released a report in 2015 that documented the gap in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in British Columbia's education system. The gap between students' levels of achievement was seen to be directly related to a belief that Indigenous learners could not achieve at the same rate as non-Indigenous learners. This belief led to the creation of lower expectation pathways for students; for example, an over-representation of Indigenous children in modified programs or graduation programs with modified/lowered expectations.

Bias - Bias is favouring of one thing against another, a person, or a group. Generally understood to be unfair or unjustified. Bias can be explicit (such as using a person's identity to deny them services) or implicit (such as unconsciously favoring someone on the basis of their name being familiar)

Discrimination - The prejudicial treatment of a group of people or things on the basis of their identity or category. Examples include race, age, sex, or ability.

Microaggressions - Racial microaggressions are persistent expressions of racism or bias that are repeatedly faced by minority peoples. For example, jokes that rely on stereotypes or involve assumptions about a person's place/country of origin are a type of microaggression. Microaggressions harm deeply over time as a result of their repetitive nature.

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Privilege - Often described as white privilege, privilege is about the advantage earned by an individual's skin colour or the benefits that come from one's position within society. The term 'unearned privilege' is also used when one's privilege flows from being a member of a dominant community. Often privilege is invisible - because as a member of the dominant culture, you can 'count' on your status to assist you in your daily life without having reason to be concerned someone is discriminating against you on the basis of your membership in a minority group.

Cultural Safety - Cultural safety involves the creation of space for everyone, regardless of their culture and heritage to feel welcomed as participants in respectful dialogue that values and acknowledges diverse perspectives and views. Cultural safety allows everyone to feel they can safely raise concerns and have their perspectives respected.

Cultural Humility - Cultural humility is a way of engaging in self-reflection about one's own beliefs, understandings, and assumptions in order to better understand how to accept and recognize diverse ways of being in the world. Cultural humility seeks to create spaces for different and sometimes competing perspectives and doesn't assume there is only one way to know/be in the world. It is a lifelong process of learning and involves a commitment to being open to learning about others.

Liberatory - Liberatory is to be free from domination and to work with others to ensure the freedom of all. The principles of equitable social change and an end to oppression are envisioned by principles of liberation.

Reconciliation - This word is meant to focus on the achievement of mutual regard and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Education is a central feature of reconciliation work.

Restorative Justice - Restorative justice seeks to repair the harm caused by violence, discrimination, bias, or marginalization. It is based on the principle of bringing together victims and perpetrators in culturally safe environments where the impacts of the harm can be fully understood, and to develop some form of restitution so the harm will not be repeated. In many Indigenous communities, healing or talking circles are used to help offenders, victims, families, and supporters to enable a deep form of listening and learning.

Indigenization - This is the process of intentionally integrating Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and worldviews into educational curricula and methods of teaching. It is meant to be culturally inclusive; that is, it seeks to explicitly include diverse forms of cultural knowledge, rather than relying solely on Western knowledge systems.

Decolonization - Decolonization is a term used to describe how one interrogates, reveals, makes evident or public how systems of thinking, practices and organizational processes are aligned with Western (or European/Colonial) ways of knowing and doing. When a system is attempting to decolonize its approaches, it seeks to find alternatives to established ways of doing things which have limited the ability of diverse communities to fully access benefits of the system; it essentially is a way of thinking through how white privilege and colonial power has been operationalized.

Trauma-informed Practice - This is a strength-based practice designed to understand and be responsive to the impacts of trauma experienced by individuals, communities, or groups of people. Its emphasis is on

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creating emotionally safe environments so survivors can rebuild or experience a sense of control and empowerment.

Allyship - An ally is someone who promotes and aspires to advancing a culture of inclusion through intentional and positive means. Allyship is not an identity but is a lifelong process of working with non-dominant communities and individuals in relationship and in collective efforts to achieve inclusivity. An ally often uses their power and privilege as a means to question the status quo and advocate with others to end discrimination or marginalization.

Historical Terms

Residential Schools - Residential schools were established by the Government of Canada. They were a system of boarding schools and day schools run by a variety of religious orders that Indigenous children were required by law to attend between 1894 and 1947. Their purpose was to culturally assimilate all Indigenous children - to “take the Indian out of the child”. Children were forbidden to speak their own languages and required to embrace Christianity. More than 4,100 children died in Canadian residential schools (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation). There were 139 residential schools in Canada: the last one closed in 1997.

Doukhobor children were forced into government-run residential schools between the years 1953 and 1959.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission created a historical, truthful record of the residential school system in Canada. Between 2007 and 2015, the Commission heard submissions from residential school survivors across Canada, a total of more than 6,500 witnesses. It also hosted many national events to help educate the public about the history and the legacy of residential schools. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report* summarized the findings of the Commission. This multi-volume report included 94 “Calls to Action” for all sectors of Canadian society, including education.

Colonialism - Colonialism is the historic practice of European expansion into territories already occupied by Indigenous peoples; in general, the intention of colonizers was to claim the territory and its resources as their own. It also involved the violent suppression of Indigenous peoples’ cultures, languages, governance systems, and social structures. “Colonialism remains an ongoing process, shaping both the structure and the quality of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples” (TRC Final Report, 2016).

Settlers/colonizers - These terms are often used interchangeably and refer to Canadians/peoples who are descended from those of European ancestry who have claimed ownership of Indigenous lands or have become members of the dominant society. Settlers often think of themselves as being the first to inhabit an area, even if it was previously occupied by Indigenous peoples.

Identity Abbreviations

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IBPOCQ2+ - This is a term that abbreviates marginalized communities including people who are: Indigenous, Black, a person of colour, queer (lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, transgender, non-binary) or Two Spirit.

Legislation

UNDRIP - The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations in September 2007 as a standard to ensure the survival of Indigenous peoples. 144 nations around the world adopted the standards, although Canada did not do so until 2016. In British Columbia, UNDRIP was written into law and is called The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act (DRIPA). It was adopted in 2019.

DRIPA Implementation Plan - This action plan was released by the Government of BC in March 2022. It is designed to assist government bodies across British Columbia to address the principles of UNDRIP, including ongoing consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, annually reporting on progress towards the goals of UNDRIP, ensuring the alignment of BC laws with these intentions, and ensuring that the rights, interests, priorities, and concerns of First Peoples are considered in the actions taken by government and government agencies.

BC Human Rights Code - The BC Human Rights Code is a law designed to protect and promote human rights. It helps to protect individuals from discrimination and harassment. It is managed by the BC Human Rights Tribunal; individuals or groups can launch a complaint under the Human Rights Code, and it will be investigated. There are a variety of protected grounds in the BC Human Rights Code, including: race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, or criminal conviction.

Multiculturalism Act - This Act was passed by the government of Canada in 1988. It was designed to promote and maintain a diverse, multicultural society and assure the cultural freedom of all Canadians. Originally the Act was seen as a means of assisting cultural and ethnic groups in overcoming barriers to participation in Canadian Society. These rights are also affirmed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms - The Charter is part of the Canadian Constitution. It protects all Canadian citizens, permanent residents and newcomers to the rights set out in the Charter. It came into effect in 1982. Democratic rights, mobility rights, language rights, equality rights, legal rights, and enforcement provisions are set out in the Charter.

Canadian Human Rights Act - This Act was passed in 1985 and sets out the principles of human rights protections on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, pregnancy or childbirth, genetic characteristics, disability, or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted. The BC Human Rights Code has similar protections.

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