

OCIC ANTI-OPPRESSION POLICY

Approved by the Board of Directors January 2015; revised June 2018

Preamble

OCIC's work, both internally and as a collective of members, is grounded in our shared vision of global social justice, human dignity and participation for all. Our policies are designed to meet OCIC's internal needs as an organization, however they are guided by ideals about anti-oppression, human rights, international cooperation, and the appropriate meeting of human needs articulated in a multitude of places by multilateral bodies, states, and civil society groups.

All OCIC policies and activities are informed by our Vision, Mission, Mandate, and Strategic Directions. Mindfulness of the spirit and letter of these documents is central to the integrity of the Council, as is compliance with the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) Code of Ethics, the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness, and OCIC's Anti-Oppression Policy and Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policy.

OCIC recognizes that our vision requires changes in human relations and the transformation of social structures. With this Anti-Oppression Policy we outline strategies for the Council to move from principle to practice.

This policy is a living document that is meant to be re-examined and re-configured as part of an evolving process which will reflect changes in thinking surrounding anti-oppression. We invite constructive feedback from our members and the larger community to assist us in constantly improving our practice. According to the *Ontario Human Rights Code*¹, the *Code* supersedes this document.

This policy will not automatically make OCIC oppression-free, eliminate oppressive organizational structures and personal behaviours, or erase the grievances of previously oppressed and marginalized people. This policy aims at informing and increasing our commitment to addressing and confronting oppressive behaviours and systems. We intend that our membership can use this policy as a starting point to create and adopt Anti-Oppression policies and practices for their own organizations.

1. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Discrimination may take two forms - direct or indirect. Direct discrimination refers to unequal or unfavourable treatment on the basis of a prohibited ground and indirect discrimination means equal treatment that has a disproportionate, negative impact on a particular individual or group.

Oppression is the use of power or privilege by a socially, politically, economically, or culturally dominant group (or groups) to disempower (take away or reduce power), marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate another social group or category.

Systemic Oppression consists of practices, policies, laws and standards that disadvantage a particular group or category of people.

¹ http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm

Individual Oppression is demeaning and oppressive behaviour towards and treatment of a particular group or category of people, expressed through individual attitudes, beliefs and values.

Anti-Oppression is the work of actively challenging and removing oppression perpetuated by power inequalities in society, both systemic oppression and individual expressions of oppression.

Intersectionality is oppression [that] arises out of the combination of various oppressions which, together, produce something unique and distinct from any one form of discrimination standing alone.²

2. Review

As per OCIC's 3-year review policy, this policy is to be reviewed and/or updated by the Governance Committee by April 2021.

3. Policy Principles

OCIC's Anti-Oppression Policy is based on the following principles:

- To actively challenge systemic and individual oppression as a result of power inequality expressed through attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions.
- To put into practice our belief in the need to eliminate all forms of inequity, exploitation, and discrimination against peoples and individuals based on factors including: age, race, colour, culture, religion, creed, ethnicity, language, disability, socio-economic status, ancestry, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, family or marital status, number of dependents, record of offenses (in employment), receipt of public assistance, citizenship, and residency/migratory status.
- To integrate equity, equality, inclusiveness, diversity, access and respect in all organizational decision-making processes, day-to-day practices, and programming.
- OCIC recognizes that through an intersectional approach to anti-oppression we acknowledge the various factors (such as age, sex, race, etc.) which can impact an individual's ability to fully recognize their rights. Please refer to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's website for more details about intersectionality.³

4. Strategies

a. Personnel

- Every employee will be treated without any discrimination, interference, restriction or coercion in hiring, termination, training, upgrading, promotion, transfer, lay-off, recall, discipline and ongoing management.
- OCIC will actively seek and invite applicants for volunteering, employment, board and committee membership from diverse communities and partners.
- The board of directors will select new staff from a field of candidates with the requisite knowledge and experience in managing or working in a culturally diverse workforce.

² M. Eaton, "Patently Confused, Complex Inequality and Canada v. Mossop" (1994) 1 Rev. Cons. Stud. 203 at 229.

³ Ontario Human Rights Commission:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/intersectional-approach-discrimination-addressing-multiple-grounds-humanrights-claims/introduction-intersectional-approach#fn6>.

- Through the annual performance review, all staff will be evaluated on their role in helping OCIC achieve its goals for anti-oppression.

b. Programs

- OCIC acknowledges that our programs are inherently more accessible to some individuals or groups than to others. Therefore OCIC will work to ensure that, to the extent feasible, all members, volunteers, staff, board members, partners and funders see themselves and their needs reflected in the programming.
- OCIC will adopt an overall program framework that strives for equity, social justice and an end to all forms of oppression based on an intersectional approach.
- OCIC will ensure all program materials or practices are assessed for discriminatory bias, stereotyping, marginalization or exclusion, and revised as necessary.
- OCIC will actively seek collaboration with members, diverse community partners and participants in program development, activities, events, working groups and committees.
- OCIC shall provide adequate resources and training to assist all staff to design and use programming effectively in order to promote critical thinking and to challenge all forms of oppression as they engage in their work with the board of directors, OCIC members, volunteers, and those outside of the Council.
- OCIC shall seek to be an active example to members and to continually highlight good practice with respect to anti-oppression, even where that practice may question privilege and, in so doing, make some uncomfortable. OCIC shall use events and communications as opportunities to challenge bias, discrimination and oppression.
- OCIC will work, using a consensus-based approach where possible in program committee meetings, to ensure equal access for all involved in decision-making processes.
- OCIC will strive to create a positive, safe, inclusive, and physically accessible space for all meetings, orientations, trainings, gatherings, and conferences.
- OCIC will screen all content submitted for inclusion in any external communications for language or ideas that can be perceived as discriminatory or oppressive.

c. Governance

- OCIC will identify and strive to overcome barriers that may prevent individuals from diverse communities from becoming board members and/or accessing its services.
- OCIC's Membership and Nominations Committee will seek to recruit board nominees that represent the diversity of the province of Ontario.
- New members of the board of directors will receive an orientation to the mission, vision, policies, organizational goals, board functions and responsibilities with respect to anti-oppression.
- Board members will be accountable for providing leadership in helping the organization fulfill its mission and goals relating to anti-oppression.

d. Membership

- Every member will be treated without any discrimination, interference, restriction or coercion.
- OCIC will actively seek and invite applicants for organizational and associate membership from diverse communities.
- The Membership and Nominations Committee will seek feedback from members on issues related to inclusion and the removal of barriers to their active participation in the Council.

e. Policy

- The development of all OCIC policies will occur within an inclusive, intersectional, and anti-oppressive framework.
- When the Governance Committee conducts its reviews of OCIC policies, it will consider the policies' fit within our inclusive and anti-oppressive framework and recommend improvements to policies and practices as necessary.

f. Sustainability

- OCIC will screen all potential sources of funding for alignment with OCIC's anti-oppression model and will endeavour to avoid partnerships with companies and organizations which are known to be discriminatory or oppressive.
- OCIC will share its anti-oppression focus with all donors, funders and supporters.