

OHTN ACTION PLAN TO CONFRONT ANTI-BLACK RACISM



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INTRODUCTION



Background and Purpose

In the summer of 2020, following nationwide political actions in defense of Black people's rights and wellbeing, Black OHTN staff began to meet on a regular basis to discuss how anti-Black racism emerges in the organization and its work. The Black staff developed a list of recommendations to address anti-Black racism and strengthen OHTN's commitment to racial equity, diversity and inclusion. In consultation with other OHTN staff, this list of recommendations has been reformulated as an Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.

The issues and proposed activities outlined in this Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism are informed by our cumulative experiences, as Black individuals who work for OHTN and as members of Black communities that continue to experience anti-Black racism and HIV disparities.

By anti-Black racism, we are referring to prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that are directed at people of African descent and rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, to the extent that anti-Black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger White society. Anti-Black racism is manifest in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians, which includes unequal opportunities, lower socioeconomic status, higher unemployment, significant rates of poverty and incarceration, and worse physical and mental health outcomes, including disproportionately high rates of HIV.

We believe that to address Black racial inequities in the workplace and within our programs, our response must be specific and intentional in naming and confronting anti-Black racism.

As such, this Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is not an attempt to usurp a multicultural voice. Nor does it purport to speak on behalf of other racialized and marginalized communities.

However, we recognize that to drive long lasting change, other marginalized communities — particularly Indigenous communities — must be given an opportunity to identify inequities and be supported in their struggle for self-determination.

For this reason, imbedded in our Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is a separate proposal for the development and implementation of a comprehensive OHTN Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy. We hope that this comprehensive Strategy will build on the Action Plan to help bring communities together and create strong, sustainable foundations for diversity, racial equity and inclusion.

There are many actions we can and must take as leaders in our sector to address anti-Black racism and drive change in the response to HIV in Ontario. It starts at the organizational level, where we encourage colleagues and partners to speak up, identify inequities, commit to action, and become allies in the movement for a truly equitable HIV endgame.

Approach and Consultations

This *Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism* reflects a comprehensive approach to develop systems and processes that will ensure equity and inclusion are at the center of our work. Items on this Action Plan were developed and informed by Black staff at OHTN. Consultations were conducted with senior and executive leadership to ensure that action items are feasible and align with current OHTN Program Plan priorities. It is important to note that Recommendation 1 of the original **Black OHTN Recommendations** (Appendix C) “Achieving equity, fairness and transparency in hiring, retention and remuneration” mainly focuses on hiring and retention. Actions specific to remuneration, pay equity, compensation grades with determinants that clarify when one will advance in the range are not included in this Action Plan. Remuneration remains an OHTN priority and will be addressed through a separate process under HR’s leadership.

Governance of the Action Plan

The Black OHTN staff are committed to an ongoing role in implementing and managing the Action Plan. Therefore, we propose that the OHTN establish a **Confronting Anti-Black Racism Committee** (CABRc) to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan and resulting outcomes (i.e. to oversee and advise on implementation, monitoring, and renewal). This committee will report to the Executive Director and will provide regular updates to the OHTN Board.

The proposed CABRc will comprise of:

- ▶ 2 Senior Black staff (Director or Senior Lead)
- ▶ 2 Black staff
- ▶ The ED or their designate
- ▶ One other Director or Senior Lead
- ▶ One other staff
- ▶ Other staff on ad hoc basis (as determined by the Committee)

RESOURCES

A Black Senior staff member (i.e. Director or Senior Lead) should coordinate the Action Plan as part of their workplan. OHTN management, with advice from the CABRc, will develop an annual budget for the Action Plan. This budget will help to sustain the Action Plan Coordinator’s role and other expenses associated with implementing, monitoring or renewing the Action Plan.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENDURANCE

Note that although the proposed activities on the OHTN Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism are built to align with the 2021-2022 OHTN Program Plan, the implementation of the Action Plan will be a long-term endeavor.

We anticipate that overtime, activities, their dates and dependencies may change and our timeframes will require adjustment. It will be the CABRc's responsibility to assess progress and annually renew the OHTN Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. We look to the CABRc to keep us on track and ensure that we overcome any challenges we encounter along the way and don't lose sight of the bigger picture.

Acknowledgements

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A copy of this report can be downloaded from:
<https://www.ohtn.on.ca/action-plan-to-confront-anti-black-racism/>

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ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Section 1: Governance and Policy

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
1.1 Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy	Implement a comprehensive Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy for the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Identify a Board advisory group that will mandate and oversee the creation of a comprehensive <i>Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy for the Board</i> and the organization. ii. Implement the comprehensive <i>Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy</i> for the Board and for the organization that incorporates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed <i>Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism</i>; • Recommendations from Jefferson Darrell’s <i>Diversity and Inclusion Audit</i>; and • Any feedback from the Board advisory group. iii. OHTN Board to work with representatives of the Committee to Address Anti-Black Racism (CABRc) and other relevant OHTN staff to develop and implement a joint Board-staff initiative to support various aspects of the <i>Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy</i>. 	Executive Committee of the Board; OHTN Senior Leadership; Senior Lead, Strategic Partnerships and Health Equity (for all actions)	H2 2021-22	Establish specific metrics to assess the impact of the Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy.
1.2 OHTN Action Plan to confront Anti-Black Racism	Implement the proposed OHTN Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism (Action Plan) and monitor its implementation and outcomes for sustainable impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Establish a Committee to Address Anti-Black Racism (CABRc) to oversee and advise on the implementation of the proposed Action Plan. This will be coordinated by a senior Black staff member who reports to the Executive Director. ii. With input from the CABRc, develop an annual budget for the implementation of the <i>Action Plan</i>. This budget will help to sustain the <i>Action Plan</i> Coordinator’s role and other costs associated with implementation, monitoring or renewal of the <i>Action Plan</i>. 	Executive Director; Senior Lead, Strategic Partnerships and Health Equity (for all actions)	H1 2021-22	

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
<p>1.3 Review of OHTN Policies</p>	<p>Apply a health and Black equity lens to the development, review and update of OHTN policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review and draw from resource/template: “An Integrated Anti-Oppression Framework for Reviewing and Developing Policy” (2008). ii. Integrate recommendations from Jefferson Darrell’s <i>Diversity and Inclusion Audit</i> and the Black OHTN Response to Anti-Black Racism working group recommendations to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the current OHTN Diversity and Inclusion Policy; • Conduct an equity assessment of all OHTN policies; • Based on the findings of the equity assessment, periodically review OHTN policies to ensure they do not indirectly perpetuate racial inequities. 	<p>Executive Committee of the Board; Governance Committee of the Board; OHTN Executive Office; (for all actions)</p>	<p>H1 2021-22</p>	
<p>1.4 OHTN Board Composition and Recruitment</p>	<p>Ensure that Black representation on the OHTN Board reflects the disproportionate effect of HIV on Black communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. With support and input from the Black OHTN Response to Anti-Black Racism working group, continue recruitment efforts to fill the current Board vacancy as well as future openings. ii. Work to build the pipeline for new Board members through Board committees and other OHTN advisory groups. 	<p>Executive Committee of the Board; Governance Committee of the Board; OHTN Executive Office; Senior Lead, Strategic Partnerships and Health Equity (for all actions)</p>	<p>In Progress</p>	

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
<p>1.5 OHTN Board Capacity Building</p>	<p>Enhance the Board’s capacity to understand and confront anti-Black racism and other racial inequities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensure the OHTN Board’s response to anti-Black racism is a standing item on the Board agenda. ii. Identify Black community stakeholders who will be invited to join OHTN Board meetings at regular intervals to ensure that issues related to systemic anti-Black racism are discussed from the perspective of Black communities.. 	<p>Executive Committee of the Board; Governance Committee of the Board; OHTN Executive Office (for all actions)</p>	<p>H1 2021-22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor issues addressed at Board level and evaluate progress; and • Monitor capacity building needs.
<p>1.6 OHTN Board’s Accountability</p>	<p>Strengthen Board accountability to, and dialog with, Black communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Write and publicize a statement of the OHTN Board’s commitment to, and rationale for, confronting systemic anti-Black racism. ii. OHTN Board to meet once a year with representatives of the Black community to seek advice and discuss progress in implementing the OHTN <i>Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism</i>. The first meeting will involve a review of Jefferson Darrell’s recommendations and other efforts to date. 	<p>Executive Committee of the Board; Governance Committee of the Board; (for action-i); Governance Committee of the Board; Senior Lead, Strategic Partnerships and Health Equity (for action-ii)</p>	<p>H1 2021-22 (for action-i) April 2021 (draft statement before meeting with Black community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan annually; • Assess practices as part of Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Strategy assessment; and • Update statement as needed.

Section 2: Workplace Equity

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
2.1 Recruitment and Hiring of Black Employees	<p>a. Ensure that any position being recruited for advances the racial equity and inclusion goals of the organization.</p> <p>b. Increase recruitment outreach to qualified Black candidates</p> <p>c. Ensure equitable Black representation from entry-level staff to leadership ranks.</p>	<p>i. Comprehensive review of HR hiring policies and procedures (including hiring committee representation) that incorporates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed revisions to <i>OHTN Diversity and Inclusion Policy</i>; • A revised equal employment opportunity statement that reflects racial equity goals; • An outreach strategy that utilizes existing Black networks; and • Well-defined hiring and racial equity metrics. 	Lead, HR; OHTN Executive Office (for all actions)	<p>Complete by end of H1 2021-22</p> <p>Implement as soon as policy/practice changes allow.</p> <p>Baseline report H2 2021-22</p>	Report annually on hiring and racial equity metrics to OHTN Board and senior leadership and provide high level report to staff.
2.2 Black Employee Retention and Professional Growth	<p>a. Provide employees with tools to understand the causes and impacts of anti-Black racism, in order to build it into their work and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>b. Strengthen training for leadership to build knowledge, attitudes and skills to address Black equity and inclusion.</p>	<p>i. Create a mentorship plan for Black employees seeking career mentorship that supports leadership development goals.</p> <p>ii. Report annually on workshop and training opportunities requested by Black staff, those delivered, level of satisfaction, and needs.</p> <p>iii. Measure and track compensation and promotion using racial equity metrics. Every two years, report findings back to staff in a format that protects employee confidentiality.</p>	<p>Lead, HR; OHTN Executive Office in consultation with the Black OHTN Response to Anti-Black Racism working group (for actions-i,ii)</p> <p>Lead, HR; OHTN Executive Office (for action-iii)</p>	<p>H1 2021-22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report annually on workshop and training opportunities requested, delivered, level of satisfaction, and needs; and • Report every two years on racial pay equity and professional advancement metrics.

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
<p>2.3 OHTN Employee Capacity Building</p>	<p>a. Provide employees with tools to understand the causes and impacts of anti-Black racism, in order to build it into their work and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>b. Strengthen training for leadership to build knowledge, attitudes and skills to address Black equity and inclusion.</p>	<p>i. Add resources (videos, articles, etc.) that promote understanding of anti-Black racism and anti-racism policy to the OHTN’s internal website.</p> <p>ii. Work with the CAABR to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a selection of professional development opportunities that are grounded in anti-racism; • Review the OHTN employee manual to ensure that it promotes anti-racism; • Identify managerial training to assist managers in addressing issues related to racism, and more specifically anti-Black racism; and • Organize a health and racial equity retreat for managers every 2-3 years to continuously strengthen and renew the organization’s commitment to confronting anti-Black racism. <p>iii. Identify past efforts to address systemic racism, particularly anti-Black racism, and then survey individuals who were on staff at the time about what worked and what didn’t.</p>	<p>CAABR building on the work of the Black OHTN Response to Anti-Black Racism working group; Senior Lead, Education and Capacity Building; Lead, HR (for action-ii)</p> <p>OHTN Senior Leadership (for action-iii)</p>	<p>In progress (for action-i)</p> <p>H2 2021-22 (for action ii)</p> <p>H1 2021-22 (for action-iii)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess practices annually, as part of Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy assessment; and • Report survey findings to OHTN staff and Board

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
<p>2.4 Code of Conduct</p>	<p>a. Develop clear standards and expectations for behaviour that make it clear that anti-Black harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated.</p>	<p>i. i. Develop and implement of a ‘code of conduct’ that is specific and intentional about confronting anti-Black racism, and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes a culture of openness and willingness to address anti-Black racism and other forms of discrimination; • Includes expectations around how the OHTN interacts with external stakeholders; • Describes the types of institutional mechanisms and behaviours that are discriminatory or constitute harassment; • Is linked to the revised OHTN Inclusion and Diversity Policy and any other relevant organizational policies; and • Has well-defined resolution and complaint procedures for managing and recording race-based incidents; 	<p>Lead, HR in consultation with CAABR (building on the work of the Black OHTN Response to anti-Black Racism working group)</p>	<p>H1 2021-22</p>	<p>Monitor number of incidents reported internally or externally and how they were addressed. Report regularly to the Directors and provide high-level report to OHTN staff and OHTN Board annually along with other HR metrics.</p>

Section 3: Data

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
3.1 Race-Based Data Collection	In accordance with the Anti-Racism Act, 2017 (ARA), support and enhance the collection of race-based data, the importance of access to this data for Black communities and health planners, and the centrality of Black leadership in determining the use of such data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Include a statement in the Diversity and Inclusion Policy and other OHTN policies governing the use of data that affirms the OHTN’s community approach to, and rationale for, the collection and reporting of race-based data. ii. Develop or adapt a ‘data standards guide’ for the organization outlining valid values for race categories and protocols for collection and reporting. iii. Work with program leads to support the progressive implementation of these standards. iv. Continue efforts to promote uptake of the new HIV requisition form which now collects race-based personal information. 	<p>OHTN Senior Leadership;</p> <p>Data (for action-i)</p> <p>Data; Senior Lead, Strategic Partnerships and Health Equity; Black OHTN Response to Anti-Black Racism working group (for action-ii)</p> <p>Data; Senior Lead, Strategic Partnerships and Health Equity (for action-iii)</p> <p>Data (for action-iv)</p>	H1 2021-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide explicit annual reporting on progress around race-based data collection and data management collaborations to the Board.
3.2 Access to Data	Strengthen Black stakeholders’ access to health data and their involvement and leadership in research and epidemiological surveillance relevant to Black people’s health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. In compliance with the Anti-Racism Act (2017), continue to implement or advocate for business practices that ensure OHTN data holdings are accessible and can be used by OHTN stakeholders to answer questions that are relevant to Black communities and/or inform better access to services. 	Director, Data; Senior Lead, Strategic Partnerships and Health Equity (for action-i)	H2 2021-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, integrate metrics into those monitoring the annual impact of the Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy.

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
3.3 Community Engagement	Strengthen capacity, involvement and leadership of Black stakeholders in OHTN data governance (i.e. oversight and advice regarding collection, use, sharing and reporting related to OHTN data holdings) and ability to use data to investigate and resolve issues relevant to Black communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. In conjunction with the proposed OHTN ‘data standards guide’, develop and implement a ‘code of practice’ (i.e. a document that would complement the ‘standards’) that provides detailed practical guidance on how to advance the effective involvement and leadership of Black stakeholders in data governance, including the resources that OHTN will commit to support this objective. ii. Work with program leads to implement the proposed ‘code’. iii. Implement internship opportunities across OHTN units for Black individuals who would use OHTN data (e.g. testing data, OCS data, HQ data, PrEP data, etc.) to investigate and resolve issues relevant to Black communities and/or advance their career. 	<p>Director, Data; Senior Lead, Strategic Partnerships and Health Equity (for action-i)</p> <p>CABRc building on the work of Black OHTN Response to Anti-Black Racism working group; Senior Lead, Education and Capacity Building; Lead, HR (for action-ii)</p>	H2 2021-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess practices annually, as part of Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy assessment; • Include explicit annual reporting on stakeholder partnerships and training programs in briefing notes to the OHTN Board about data initiatives; and • Explicit annual reporting on progress around the development of a ‘code of practice’ and involvement of Black stakeholders in data governance.
3.4 Health Data Linkage	Strengthen the organization’s ability to link to public health data to generate important insights around Black health outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Establish an internal OHTN working group to examine Ontario’s administrative data holdings and linkage environment, identify opportunities in and barriers to such data linking and how the barriers could be overcome, and develop a plan to facilitate stakeholders’ access to these data. 	Data in consultation with the CABRc and/or Black OHTN Response to Anti-Black Racism working group	H2 2021-22 working group formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide explicit annual reporting on progress around Health Data Linkage to OHTN Board.

Section 4: Programs

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
<p>4.1 Communi- cations</p>	<p>a. Develop and implement a communication strategy targeting Black stakeholders about OHTN programs, services and evidence products (e.g. rapid responses, fact sheets, evidence briefs, etc.), about policy and research related to understanding and addressing HIV among Black communities.</p>	<p>ii. Build an internal and external communication strategy that advances racial equity work and increases the accessibility of Black data, evidence and community insights</p> <p>iii. Include on the OHTN’s website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement that recognizes how anti-Black racism undermines Black people’s health; • A statement affirming the organizational approach and rationale for race-based data collection and reporting; • A link to the OHTN Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Strategy; • A link to the OHTN Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism; • Links to resources or tools for understanding and addressing anti-Black racism in the context of HIV and health; • Promotion of Black initiatives and projects. 	<p>Senior Lead, Communications in consultation with the Black OHTN Response to Anti-Black Racism working group and OHTN Senior Leadership (for all actions)</p>	<p>Underway; expand as part of website rebuild in 2021-22</p> <p>Underway</p>	<p>Where possible, integrate metrics into those monitoring the annual impact of the OHTN Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy.</p>

ASSESS	AIM	PROPOSED ACTION	DEPARTMENT	PROPOSED TIMELINE	PROPOSED AUDIT
<p>4.2 Health and Racial Equity Review of Programs</p>	<p>a. Ensure attention to health and racial equity, stakeholder input and leadership within OHTN programs.</p> <p>b. Develop the infrastructure to ensure that Black expertise (e.g. OHTN-funded scientists, university-based researchers, Black public health practitioners, leaders in ASOs, etc.) is instrumental to the development and promotion of relevant HIV-related initiatives and programs.</p>	<p>i. Develop a health and racial equity assessment tool for the evaluation of OHTN programs that measures stakeholder engagement, race-based data collection, racial equity and inclusion.</p> <p>ii. Implement the above assessment tool for all existing OHTN programs.</p> <p>iii. Use the assessment tool in the development of new OHTN programs.</p> <p>iv. Review the outcomes of these assessments to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity priorities for the next OHTN Program Plan; and • Mitigation strategies to address inequities. <p>v. Review and refine assessment tools as needed.</p>	<p>Data; Evidence Impact; Collective Impact; Senior Lead, Program Planning and Reporting (for action-i,ii,iii)</p> <p>Senior Lead, Program Planning and Reporting;</p> <p>All Senior Leads;</p> <p>Board; OHTN Senior Leadership (for actions-iv and v)</p>	<p>2021-22 (as part of Health and Racial Equity review process) (for action i)</p> <p>Now; complete early H1 2021-22 (for action ii)</p> <p>H2 2021-22 for subsequent OHTN Program Plan (for action iv)</p> <p>Annually (at meetings between Board and Black stakeholders) (for action v)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, integrate metrics into those monitoring the annual impact of the OHTN Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy; and • Report in briefing notes to the Board twice in 2021-22.
<p>4.3 Black Community Engagement</p>	<p>a. Strengthen dialogue between Black stakeholders and OHTN to enable open and transparent communication about internal and external efforts to confront anti-Black racism and advance diversity, racial equity and inclusion.</p>	<p>i. In addition to Action 1.6-ii, OHTN Senior Leads to organize at least one annual meeting with Black stakeholders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share results of racial equity assessments of OHTN programs and other relevant metrics; and • Gather feedback from Black community stakeholders about their expectations of the OHTN. 	<p>Senior Lead, Program Planning and Reporting;</p> <p>All Senior Leads;</p> <p>Board; OHTN Senior Leadership</p>	<p>H2 2021-22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan annually; and • Feedback to be incorporated in annual report on the impact of the OHTN Diversity, Racial Equity and Inclusion Strategy.



APPENDICES

Appendix A — Glossary of Terms

Anti-Black racism: Anti-Black racism is prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, to the extent that anti-Black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger White society. Anti-Black racism is manifest in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians, which includes unequal opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates, overrepresentation in the criminal justice system, and a disproportionate burden of HIV.

Anti-Indigenous racism: Anti-Indigenous racism is the ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by Indigenous Peoples within Canada. It includes ideas and practices that establish, maintain and perpetuate power imbalances, systemic barriers, and inequitable outcomes that stem from the legacy of colonial policies and practices in Canada. Systemic anti-Indigenous racism is evident in discriminatory federal policies such as the Indian Act and the residential school system. It is also manifest in the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in provincial criminal justice and child welfare systems, as well as inequitable outcomes in education, well-being, and health (including HIV). Individual lived-experiences of anti-Indigenous racism can be seen in the rise in acts of hostility and violence directed at Indigenous people.

Anti-racism approach: Anti-racism is a process, a systematic method of analysis, and a proactive course of action rooted in the recognition of the existence of racism, including systemic racism. Anti-racism actively seeks to identify, remove, prevent, and mitigate racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and change the structures that sustain inequities.

Affected communities: Refers to communities or groups that are directly affected by systemic racism and HIV disparities in ways that negatively impact or disadvantage individual members and/or the group as a whole.

Benchmark: A benchmark is a point of reference, or standard, against which things can be compared, assessed, or measured.

Cultural safety: A culturally safe environment is physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually safe. There is recognition of and respect for the cultural identities of others, without challenge or denial of an individual's identity, who they are, or what they need. Culturally unsafe environments diminish, demean, or disempower the cultural identity and well-being of an individual.

Data: Data consists of information collected from individuals, facts, figures, and statistics objectively measured according to a standard or scale, such as frequency, volumes or occurrences.

Inclusive: Inclusive processes, policies, services, program and practices are accessible to and useable by as many people as possible, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, age, disability, language, etc. An inclusive environment is open, safe, equitable and respectful. Everyone can enjoy a sense of trust, belonging and involvement, and everyone is encouraged to contribute and participate fully.

Indigenous: Indigenous people identify as being descended from the Original Peoples of what is currently known as Canada. In this context, Indigenous peoples include people who may identify as First Nations (status and non-status), Métis and/or Inuit and any related identities.

Notable difference: A notable difference is a magnitude of racial disproportionality or disparity that meets or exceeds a threshold considered potentially indicative of a meaningful difference in outcomes.

Race: Race is a term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits (phenotypes) such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has created (i.e. “socially constructed”), with significant consequences for people’s lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural or religious groupings.

Racism: Racism includes ideas or practices that establish, maintain or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another.

Systemic racism: Systemic racism consists of organizational culture, policies, directives, practices or procedures that exclude, displace or marginalize some racialized groups or create unfair barriers for them to access valuable benefits and opportunities. This is often the result of institutional biases in organizational culture, policies, directives, practices, and procedures that may appear neutral but have the effect of privileging some groups and disadvantaging others.

Racial bias: Racial bias is a predisposition, prejudice or generalization about a group or persons based principally on race (see definition of race).

Racial disparity: Racial disparity is unequal outcomes in a comparison of one racial group to another racial group.

Racial disproportionality: The over-representation or under-representation of a racial group in a particular program or system, compared with their representation in the general population.

Racial equity: Racial equity is the systemic fair treatment of all people. It results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. It contrasts with formal equality where people are treated the same without regard for racial differences. Racial equity is a process (such as meaningfully engaging with Indigenous, Black, and racialized clients regarding policies, directives, practices and procedures that affect them) and an outcome (such as equitable treatment of Indigenous, Black, and racialized clients in a program or service).

Racial inequality: A disparity in opportunity and treatment that occurs as a result of someone’s race.

Racialized (person or group): Racialized persons and/or groups can have racial meanings attributed to them in ways that negatively impact their social, political, and economic life. This includes but is not necessarily limited to people classified as “visible minorities” under the Canadian census and may include people impacted by antisemitism and Islamophobia.

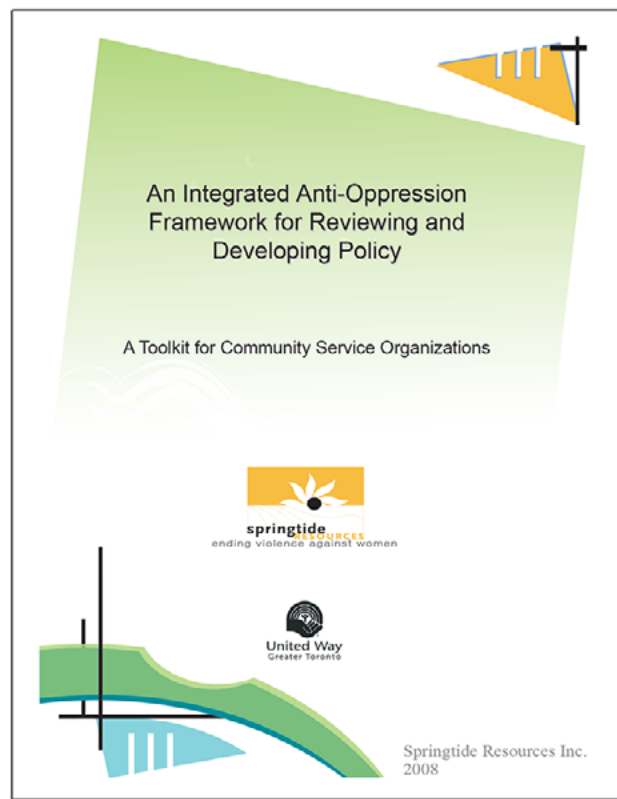
Sources: These definitions were adapted from [Ontario’s Data Standards for the Identification Monitoring of Systemic Racism](#) (2017).

Appendix B – An Integrated Anti-Oppression Framework for Reviewing and Developing Policy

An Integrated Anti-Oppression Framework for Reviewing and Developing Policy. A Toolkit for Community Service Organizations (2008)

Download at:

<https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/An-Integrated-Anti-Oppression-Framework-for-Reviewing-and-Developing-Policy-OAITH-2008.pdf>



Appendix C — Black OHTN Recommendations

The OHTN is in many respects an intellectually stimulating workplace that generally values the contributions of staff and supports their efforts. However, the agency has never explicitly acknowledged how anti-Black racism undermines Black people's health, inflates their exposure to HIV, and erodes their capacity to respond effectively to HIV. Similarly, the OHTN's commitment to ensuring equitable health outcomes has been somewhat muted.

In the Spring and summer of 2020, Black people and their allies across Canada rose up in defense of their rights and wellbeing. A number of concurrent events precipitated this uprising — continued police violence and deadly force against Black people in the USA and Canada, the grossly disproportionate toll of COVID-19 on Black communities, and the continued refusal of state entities to track and responsibly disseminate appropriate measures of Black people's health and wellbeing.

In response, the OHTN's Executive Director wrote to staff on June 2 expressing the agency's support for Black staff at a difficult time ([Appendix D](#)). The next day, the agency also published a statement on social media expressing its commitment to racial justice ([Appendix E](#)).

In the midst of the uprising, the OHTN's Black staff came together to discuss anti-Black racism at the agency, and collectively identify ways in which the agency may realize its opposition to anti-Black racism and its support for equity, inclusion and social justice. As Black staff, we recognize our role and responsibility as people inside the OHTN who are working on various components of the response to HIV among our Black communities. We have a uniquely

informed perspective on the issues we discuss in this report, but we are not usurping the 'Black voice' on OHTN's role in enabling and supporting Black people's struggle for equity, inclusion and justice in relation to health. The OHTN Executive Director has informed the OHTN Board that OHTN Black staff will bring forward some ideas and recommendations.

In a series of meetings from June to August 2020, Black staff identified (a) notable weaknesses in the agency's recognition of the threat that anti-Black racism posed to Black people's wellbeing, and (b) recommendations (actions and activities) to strengthen the OHTN's commitment to Black health and wellbeing both internally (among/for staff and Board) and externally (through OHTN's programs and community engagement activities). The responsibility for implementing the recommendations resides with the OHTN Board and senior management, working collaborative with Black staff and Black stakeholders.

The people who embarked on this process of naming issues and likely remedies are accomplished Black OHTN staff members who are also involved in different ways in African, Caribbean and Black communities in Ontario. Some of us have almost a lifetime of community involvement. The issues and recommendations outlined here are informed by our accumulated experiences as Black people who work for the OHTN and members of Black communities that have been exposed to anti-Black racism and structural violence even before Canada came into being.

Below, Black OHTN staff present the issues they identified, and actions and activities they recommend for the OHTN Board and senior management to achieve equity, inclusion and justice for Black staff, Black communities, and the OHTN. We envision the Board, senior management, Black staff and Black stakeholders working collaboratively to assess and implement the recommendations.

- ▶ Staff
- ▶ Board
- ▶ OHTN Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- ▶ OHTN Conflict of Interest (COI) policy
- ▶ OHTN Programs
- ▶ Community engagement/stakeholder relations

Staff

Achieving equity, fairness and transparency in hiring, retention and remuneration

ISSUES

- The staff salary range is too wide in each job category
- Job descriptions are unclear
- Requirements to move up in the pay scale are unclear
- Decisions about staff support and capacity building are not transparent
- Hiring committees for senior leads and directors do not always ensure transparency, fairness or equity
- Human resource issues need to be revised and updated to ensure equity, inclusion and justice for Black and other racialized staff

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Add more detail to salary grid by clarifying job descriptions within the grid
- Include steps in the salary range associated with each role
- Need for greater clarity about the starting point in the range for each grade (e.g., what is the role of experience and qualifications)

and how staff move through the range for their role.

- Provide regular updates to staff (perhaps annually) about salaries (i.e., how the grid is working or not)
- Provide clear guidelines in HR policy to (a) support capacity building by Black staff, and for all staff to work better with Black stakeholders and communities (Black capacity- training should be an organizational priority), (b) support new staff to understand anti- Black racism and OHTN’s commitment to responding to HIV and health in ways that address anti-Black racism, and (c) monitor how requests for training or capacity building are approved or disallowed to ensure equitable outcomes
- Ensure effective Black and Indigenous representations at all levels of the organization.
- Formalize policies/procedures for hiring committees to ensure equity and anti-racism in all aspects of recruitment and hiring
- Include statements reflecting OHTN’s positions on Anti-Black Racism, systemic racism, and social oppression on job advertisements

Board

Transparency in Board recruitment, composition and responsiveness to Black communities

ISSUES

- Black people’s interests are under-represented on the Board relative to the effect of HIV among Black communities
- Board initiatives are often raised and adopted without due regard for anti-Black racism and how racism undermines health and wellbeing or the initiatives being proposed
- Black communities are often unaware of initiatives adopted by the Board, which often may disadvantage Black communities

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a policy on board composition that reflects and supports Black membership commensurate with the disproportionate effect of HIV among Black communities
- ensure that priority populations (especially Black communities) are prioritized in board recruitment and composition by (a) publicizing the Board’s commitment to and rationale for equity in board recruitment, and (b) providing concrete, actionable targets or benchmarks for recruitment and composition.

- Strengthen the process or mechanisms of board accountability to the community, especially to Black communities that are most affected by HIV
- Host an annual meeting between board and Black community stakeholders to ensure that the board benefits from the contributions and input of community partners, and understands their concerns. As well, this meeting will facilitate board reporting to the community.
- Conduct a survey or assessment on the how the Board and OHTN may best reflect and address the interests of Black communities, respond to the issues that affect Black communities, and support Black communities.
- Develop a process to strengthen OHTN’s relationship with ICES and any other relevant institutions that house large publicly-funded health databases. The purpose of this initiative would be to promote/strengthen Black people’s access to relevant health data, and their involvement and leadership in research relevant to Black people’s health.

OHTN Conflict of Interest (COI) policy

ISSUE

- The current policy disadvantage Black communities and does not promote equity, justice and fairness

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess the policy to ensure that it supports equity, justice and fairness
- Clearly state how COI will be addressed in situations where perceived or real COI might exacerbate existing inequities

OHTN Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Specific revisions to the current policy

ISSUE

- The current statement is weak about addressing anti-Black racism and promoting equity, justice and fairness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Inclusion of a clear overarching statement/ message about how racial justice and equity relates back to the epidemic would greatly strengthen the statement.
- Implement an annual audit and reflection about how equity and justice are emerging (or not) at the OHTN to ensure that statements about equity, diversity, inclusion and justice have real value.

POLICY

- Should begin with a statement on justice and equity, rather than text on “diversity”.
- Second paragraph: the term “endemic” should be replaced with a different terminology that adds value to equity.
- Third paragraph: oppressions must be named. Add a statement that identifies anti-Black racism and other forms of racism and discrimination as systemic barriers.

BARRIERS

- The “barriers” must be named. Emphasis should be placed on the systemic and structural nature of these barriers.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Third bullet point: “relative to their numbers.” This should be “relative to the disproportionate impact/burden.”

OHTN OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Clear guidelines should outline the specific actions that OHTN will take to address racial justice and equity internally (among staff and board) and in relation to HIV and health more generally.

OHTN Programs

OHTN databases and associated KTE activities — OCS, OHESI and OCASE

ISSUES:

- Black communities deserve greater input and oversight about the collection, use, dissemination and sharing of data about them

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop and implement a clear policy on data collection and management that recognises a leadership role for Black stakeholders in decisions about (a) collecting, using, sharing and disseminating data from OCS, OCASE and OHESI about Black communities, and (b) engaging Black communities for data collection and dissemination activities.

- Identify processes to encourage Black researchers, students and other stakeholders to work with OCS data, and pathways for Black organizations (or those that predominantly serve Black communities) to use OCS data.
- Organize an annual OCS internship for Black individuals who would use OCS data to investigate and resolve issues relevant to the Black communities and/or advance their career
- Implement processes to secure ASO's approval to use of OCASE data in order to answer questions that are relevant to Black communities and/or inform better access to services.

Communications

ISSUES:

- The OHTN communications practices obscure the contributions of Black stakeholders, fail to acknowledge anti-Black racism,
- Current communications outputs, tools and practices do not articulate the role of racism in undermining Black people's health and wellbeing, or a strategy to achieve equitable health outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop a communication strategy targeting Black stakeholders about OHTN programs and services, and other information about policy, programs and research related to understanding and addressing HIV among Black communities
- Reorganize the OHTN website in order to better feature and highlight initiatives specific to Black communities, and the contributions of those communities
- Include on the OHTN's website (a) a statement that recognizes how anti-Black racism undermines Black people's health, (b) a strategy for responding to HIV in the context of anti-Black racism, and (c) links to resources or tools for understanding and addressing anti-Black racism in the context of HIV and health

Engaging expertise from Black communities

ISSUES:

- Black communities may not benefit substantively from OHTN programs that are often designed without consulting Black communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop the infrastructure to ensure that Black expertise (Senior Scientist, university- based researchers, Black public health practitioners, leaders in ASOs) is instrumental to the development and promotion of relevant HIV-related initiatives and programs.
- Ensure that consultation with Black staff and Black stakeholders are an integral part of any new initiative led by OHTN.

Evaluating and monitoring OHTN programs for equity, inclusion and anti-racism

ISSUES

- The institutional commitment to equity, inclusion, fairness and justice is weak, and will remain so without specific supports for those values and outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To support equity and fairness, OHTN should:

- At agreed intervals (e.g., annually or every two years, etc.), evaluate all its programs for anti-Black racism, equity and inclusion
- Provide senior management with access to equity assessment tools and frameworks, and support to use those tools and frameworks. The assessments should be mandatory, and the results should be available to all staff.

Community engagement/stakeholder relations

OHTN staff working with Black communities and other external stakeholders

ISSUES

- OHTN staff relationships with Black stakeholders and communities often generate misunderstanding
- There is a lack of clarity about how staff may work with Black communities in ways that address anti-Black racism, promote equity and strengthen Black self-determination
- There is a lack of clarity about the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of OHTN staff participating in initiatives and events involving external stakeholders


RECOMMENDATIONS:

- OHTN's expectations for staff working with Black and other stakeholders should be clearly stated, and guided by a commitment to addressing anti-Black racism, promoting equity, and strengthening Black self-determination
- Clarify policies on how OHTN staff represent the organization's values with outside stakeholders
- Clarify how conflicts of interest may occur when Black staff work with Black communities and stakeholders, and how those conflicts may be understood, acknowledged and managed.

Appendix D — Email to OHTN staff from Jean Bacon, Executive Director

June 2, 2020

This letter is going to be a bit different. The news broadcasts coming out of the US have pushed COVID into the background and brought back into stark, sad focus the seemingly intractable problem of racism and its relentless impact on Black people - whether they are jogging, birdwatching in Central Park, at home in their apartment or sitting in their car outside a convenience store. I would like to acknowledge, with the greatest respect and admiration, the people protesting against police brutality and institutionalized racism. I would also like to acknowledge the incredible, unfair and inequitable challenges Black people face at this point in time. As Kareem Abdul-Jabbar said:



The black community [in the US] is used to the institutional racism inherent in education, the justice system and jobs. And even though we do all the conventional things to raise public and political awareness, the needle hardly budge. But COVID-19 has been slamming the consequences of a that home as we die at a significantly higher rate than whites, are the first to lose our jobs, and watch helplessly as Republicans try to keep us from voting. What you should see when you see black protesters in the age of Trump and coronavirus is people pushed to the edge, not because they want bars and nail salons, but because they want to live.

It is extremely painful to see people who are peacefully protesting violence being treated with yet more violence. As Canadians watch history unfold on CNN, it would be easy for us to lay all these recent problems at the feet of a president who has openly encouraged racism, bigotry, misogyny, violence, anarchy, and white supremacy. It would also be easy for us to be a bit smug: "Things aren't perfect in Canada but at least we're not the US." But racism is alive and well here too. In Toronto, Black people are disproportionately affected by aggressive policing, by COVID and by HIV. Black Canadians also experience disproportionately high rates of poverty, food insecurity and incarceration. We have our own longstanding problems and racial inequities that we have never fully acknowledged or addressed.

As people and an organization committed to social justice, what can we do to help create a more just world for all? It's up to us to let our Black colleagues know that we understand how incredibly painful and frightening things are right now, that we realize that they live each day with more fear and a greater sense of injustice than those of us who are White. We need to be willing to speak up each and every time we see racism playing out in our community and society. As Martin Luther King said,

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about what matters.

In our work, we need to create space and opportunities for everyone, regardless of race to have a voice and to grow and thrive. As an organization, we need to ensure we have strong Black voices on our Board, on our committees and on staff. We need policies that promote equity and self-determination. We also have to invest in the young Black scholars who will become tomorrow's leaders, and work closely with the Black networks of agencies and researchers to address systemic racism where it occurs. The OHTN has been working hard to encourage the routine collection of race data so we can identify and measure racial disparities – both in terms of health outcomes and the social determinants of health – and then help our sector develop programs and services that close those gaps.

Only a small number of us in the office will remember the violence Martin Luther King faced in his fight for civil rights, his assassination and the protests that followed – or how they led to a massive shift in laws and policies. The response to Dr. King's death and the civil rights movement was not enough – and some of the changes were later undermined by systems that should have protected them – but the needle did move. For that reason, those of us who are old enough to remember watch what is happening now with pain, sorrow, frustration, anger. And with hope. When people truly come together to fight for justice, the world can change. At this moment, let's look for ways to move that needle and create a truly just society that respects, celebrates and safeguards us all.

Jean

Appendix E — OHTN Statement of Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

June 3, 2020

The black community [in the US] is used to the institutional racism inherent in education, the justice system and jobs. And even though we do all the conventional things to raise public and political awareness...the needle hardly budge. But COVID-19 has been slamming the consequences of a that home as we die at a significantly higher rate than whites, are the first to lose our jobs, and watch helplessly as Republicans try to keep us from voting. What you should see when you see black protesters in the age of Trump and coronavirus is people pushed to the edge, not because they want bars and nail salons, but because they want to live.

—Kareem Abdu -Jabbar

It would be easy for us to be a bit smug: “Things aren’t perfect in Canada but at least we’re not the US.” But racism is alive and well here too. In Toronto, Black people are disproportionately affected by aggressive policing, by COVID and by HIV. Whether they are jogging, birdwatching, at home in their apartment or sitting in their car outside a convenience store, Canadians also experience disproportionately high rates of poverty, food insecurity and incarceration. Because of anti-Black racism.

As people and an organization committed to social justice, what can we do to help create a more just world for all? It’s up to us to let our Black colleagues know that we understand how incredibly painful and frightening things are right now, that we realize that they live each day with more fear and a greater sense of injustice than those of us who are White. We need to be willing to speak up each and every time we see racism playing out in our community and society.

As an organization, we need to ensure we have strong Black voices on our Board, within our committees and on staff. We need policies that promote equity and self-determination. We also have to invest in the young Black scholars who will become tomorrow’s leaders, and work closely with the Black networks of agencies and researchers to address systemic racism.

We would like to acknowledge, with the greatest respect and admiration, the people protesting against police brutality and institutionalized racism. We would also like to acknowledge the incredible, unfair and inequitable challenges Black people face. It is extremely painful to see people who are peacefully protesting violence being treated with yet more violence. We stand together with our Black colleagues, partners, collaborators, and the entire Black community.

We stand with people around the globe to speak out against racism, to promote understanding, and to create a change. We can move the needle. It is possible, but it’s not going to happen if we rest or stay quiet.

In solidarity,
The Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN)