



## **POSITION STATEMENT** ***On Racism***

### **About the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan**

The Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS) has been raising awareness of the benefits of cultural diversity and the dangers of racism since November 22, 1975. MCoS is a provincial not-for-profit, non-governmental agency that works to ensure ethnocultural survival, strength and prominence and foster opportunities for cross-cultural interaction.

Our vision: Multiculturalism is central to the cultural, social, economic, and political life of Saskatchewan.

Our Mission: The Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan is committed to promoting, fostering, improving and developing multiculturalism in the economic, cultural and political life of Saskatchewan while working to achieve equality of all residents.

### Our Aims & Objectives:

- To promote recognition of the benefits of cultural diversity in Saskatchewan and assist in the development and acceptance of multiculturalism.
- To recognize and promote the Saskatchewan motto: From Many Peoples Strength and the Saskatchewan Multicultural Act.
- To foster an environment in which organizations and individuals can contribute to the multicultural development of Saskatchewan.
- To promote positive cross-cultural relations through cross-cultural communication, contact and understanding.
- To recognize the special contribution which refugees and immigrants bring into our province and assist in the integration process through education.
- To recognize the special contributions which First Nations and Métis people provide to our province and encourage cultural competency and intercultural connections.

## What is Racism?

The Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan subscribes to the following definition of racism:

The United Nations Association in Canada defines racial discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”

## Understanding the scope of racism<sup>1</sup>

Racism manifests in many ways:

**Individual racism** is between people, e.g. treatment in stores and restaurants.

**Systemic racial discrimination** is embedded in institutional systems; the direct link between residential schools’ conscious cultural destruction to social issues, such as poverty, employment, education, health and legal issues for Indigenous people is an example.

**Cultural racism** is the social production and reproduction of values and standards which privilege one group’s cultural heritage and identity over those of another; encourage schools to include Indigenous perspectives and content, reflect the full diversity of Saskatchewan, especially values and beliefs beyond holidays, performance and food.

**Internalized racism** occurs when people targeted by racism come to believe that the stereotypes and prejudices of racism are valid. They may act out this belief by oppressing others of their own group, or by devaluing themselves through feelings of shame, self-hatred, isolation, powerlessness, self-doubt and despair.

It is important to understand that one cannot effectively deal with racism until one looks at all the underlying causes and takes steps to correct them.

## Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination:

When MCoS hosts anti-racism youth leadership workshops, participants learn that:

- Guilt is the glue that holds prejudice in place. People usually do not change their attitudes or behaviours when they are blamed or shamed. Guilt behaviours include moralizing, condemnation, judging, giving polite shallow responses.
- Prejudice and discrimination affect people at the mental, spiritual and emotional level; healing must also address these levels.
- Deeply connecting with other peoples’ stories is healing to both the speaker and the listener and is a more effective way to shift attitudes than lecturing and theory.
- Prejudice can be “in your face”, but often is very subtle. Practicing skills for reality in intervention to interrupt day-to-day instances of racism, i.e. oppressive jokes and slurs, empowers people to take larger institutional/ societal policies and procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.monash.edu.au/social-justice/cultural-inclusion/forms-of-racism.html>

## 12 Things to Do to Address Racism<sup>2</sup>

In order to stop racism, these are concrete steps everyone can take in their daily lives:

1. Work towards liberating yourself from being an oppressor.
2. Try to help others in your group understand how oppression works.
3. Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen .....
4. Remember that everyone in the oppressor group is part of the oppression and that the process of unlearning oppression is never finished.
5. Realize that feeling guilty is very unhelpful for everyone and that a useful role is to take part in the struggle to end oppression.
6. Try not to be defensive and deny responsibility for oppressive acts, but ask questions and learn more about the oppression that is going on in a particular situation.
7. Count your privileges; keep a list. Break the invisibility of privilege.
8. If you hear an oppressive comment or see an example of oppression at work, try to speak up first.
9. Try to avoid the trap of “knowing what is good for them” for members of oppressed groups.
10. Join with other members of oppressor groups in the journey of unlearning oppression and working towards change.
11. Learn what you can about an oppressed group - read, ask questions, listen. But do not necessarily expect everybody in the group to be willing to teach you now that you are ready to learn.
12. Be yourself. Do not try to claim the roots and connections that a history of oppression can give to a community if it is not your own. The best thing you can do is to dig into your roots, history, connections.

## Racism in Saskatchewan

MCoS is aware that racism is extremely prevalent and deep-rooted in Saskatchewan. We hear evidence from our members who often experience and/or witness racism. While research and statistics are difficult to obtain on this topic, one study by the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, asked respondents “Who is least likely to feel accepted by their non-Aboriginal neighbours?” and the answer was Saskatoon and Regina.<sup>3</sup>

“This is precisely why MCoS does anti-racism workshops for youth and trains people to facilitate them. It is why we execute an annual campaign against racism in order to prompt thinking and discussion about stereotypes and racism,” explains Rhonda Rosenberg, Executive Director of MCoS. “It is why we make sure we reach out to include diverse organizations from multiple ethnocultural and faith communities, including indigenous organizations. It is why we encourage others (such as the government) to also include diverse voices.”

MCoS has over 60 members from the multicultural community, many who can speak to the issue of racism in Saskatchewan. We can connect you with our members at your request.

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<sup>2</sup>Adapted from Ann Bishop, 1994. *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression*, pp. 96-101. Halifax: Fernwood.

<sup>3</sup> [http://uaps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/UAPS-Regina-powerpoint\\_Final.pdf](http://uaps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/UAPS-Regina-powerpoint_Final.pdf)

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### **About the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS)**

The Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan is a charitable, non-profit organization committed to promoting, fostering, improving and developing multiculturalism in the cultural, economic, social and political life of Saskatchewan while working to achieve equality of all residents. We support member organizations through workshops, investments in their activities that implement our mission, aims and objectives, networking and information, and being the lead voice on multiculturalism in the province. We also support anti-racism and multicultural education activities in schools. We celebrate significant dates, such as Saskatchewan Multicultural Week in November, Black History Month in February, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21<sup>st</sup>, Hispanic Heritage Month in April, Asian Heritage Month in May, National Aboriginal History Month in June, and Celebrate Canada from June 21<sup>st</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>. We are supported by SaskCulture through Saskatchewan Lotteries. For more information, please visit [www.mcos.ca](http://www.mcos.ca) and follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

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