

COMBATING ANTI-BLACK & ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM: AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS MADE FURTHER TO OUR ACTION PLAN

June 4, 2021

In October 2020, following a summer of reflection and careful consideration, Scarborough Community Legal Services (SCLS) shared a statement of support for Black and Indigenous community members living with the daily reality of violence and racist systems of oppression. We pledged to listen and learn how to do better as allies. We committed to an action plan to better serve our Black and Indigenous community members and to take meaningful steps to address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism over the following year.

Since we first shared our statement of support over six months ago, we have continued to read headlines about violence perpetrated against Black and Indigenous communities. Even during the trial of Derek Chauvin, the police officer convicted of murdering George Floyd, we saw further incidents of police shootings of Black people.

We know that violence is experienced by other racialized communities as well. In particular, we condemn the frightening increase in discrimination toward the Chinese and Asian communities seen over the last year. We express our sincere grief and condolences to those affected by the abhorrent violence we saw on March 21, 2021 in Atlanta, Georgia when eight people were murdered, including six Asian American women. That bitter day has been etched in our collective memory and is yet another one to be added to the many tragic days of violence we have seen in recent years. While this incident occurred in America, Canadians must also recognize and fight against the reality of racism and violence experienced by Asian Canadians across this country.

Further to our commitment to transparency and accountability, we are providing our community with an update about the actions we have taken to date and about our plan for the future:

- We are collecting race-based data and have developed a protocol which includes information about the intent for the collection and use of this data.
- We held an all-staff meeting to discuss the issues of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in relation to our work and had an open, honest, and safe discussion of staff members' own lived experiences of racism and discrimination.
- We participated in trainings lead by the Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC) and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) about understanding and combating anti-Black racism.
- Our staff participated in training led by a registered social worker regarding trauma informed practice.
- We have become an employer partner with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, providing us with access to valuable training materials and workshops.

- We celebrated Black History Month with two learning events, including an African storytelling workshop.
- We have begun to reach out to local organizations that serve Black and Indigenous communities in Scarborough to strengthen these connections.
- Our Board of Directors' Policy Committee has begun to develop an anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism lens which will be applied to all SCLS policies. This lens will be reviewed by our Board's Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Committee, the staff, and our Board of Directors before being finalized.
- Our Board of Directors approved two changes to our hiring practices, including providing the salary range for all public job postings and making lived experience and intersectional identities merit factors when hiring for all staff positions.

Throughout the remainder of 2021, we will continue to work diligently on our action plan. We commit to taking the following actions:

- We will continue our outreach efforts to connect with organizations that serve the Black and Indigenous communities in Scarborough and will work with these organizations to develop more public legal education activities specifically designed for members of these communities.
- We have engaged Bear Standing Tall and Associates to provide anti-Indigenous racism training for our staff and Board members this summer.
- We will begin the process of applying an anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism lens to all our policies. We believe this process will take up to 18 months to complete.
- We will continue to review our hiring and retention practices to ensure the diversity of our staff reflects the community we serve.
- All staff and Board members who participate in hiring processes will complete unconscious bias training.
- We will develop and implement a plan to review our current areas of practice to determine if we are meeting the needs of Black and Indigenous community members in Scarborough.

Over the next seven months, we will continue to take concrete steps toward holding ourselves accountable and engaging meaningfully in the fight against racism. We will provide another update about our progress in our 2021 Annual Report and at our AGM this autumn. We know that the task ahead is a daunting one, but we whole-heartedly believe that hope is greater than fear and equity will prevail.

We welcome feedback from our community at all times.