Anti-Oppression Workshop
For DSU Societies

Outline:

- Session 1: Understanding Oppression:
  *Foundation, Concepts, and Introductory Themes*

- Session 2: Current and Local Contexts:
  *Oppression in Canada, Nova Scotia, and Dalhousie University*

- Session 3: Decolonization and Liberation:
  *Applying an Anti-Oppressive Lens to Society Affairs*

Goals:

- Recognizing concepts, terms, and themes related to equity, social justice, and anti-oppression
- Acknowledging current impacts, legacies, and manifestations of oppression
- Understanding the local implications and manifestations of oppression
- Applying learning in a continuous manner with humility and self-education at the core
- Relating this knowledge to your roles as club and society leaders

Note:
This workshop comes with accompanying workbook. In the workbook you will find the necessary exercises, quizzes and reflections for you to complete the workshop. The purpose of the workbook is to ensure active participation and engagement with the workshop material. Your responses in the workbook will not be evaluated, shared or distributed without your consent.

Session 1: Understanding Oppression
*Foundations, Concepts, and Introductory Themes*
Introduction

**Why are you in an anti-oppression workshop?**
The purpose of this anti-oppression training is to provide you, as clubs & society leaders, with the knowledge, skills and capacity to contribute to a positive, inclusive, and discrimination-free environment at Dalhousie University. In order to achieve this, it is critical that you be educated on issues surrounding anti-oppression. As you journey through these positions of leadership, it’s important to reflect on and commit to using your position in responsible, ethical, and equitable ways. You have the capacity to contribute to the existence of inclusive and accepting communities at Dalhousie, and the goal of this anti-oppression training is to provide you with the knowledge and skills to achieve this.

**Setting goals:**
What you take away from this workshop is what you put into it. Participation is critical, especially since you will be learning online at your own pace. We encourage you to be open and willing to engage with difficult topics and ideas through a reflective, critical, and mindful lens. Some of these topics can be challenging and difficult, especially for those with personal experiences with oppression. Please be mindful to take the time and space you need to process this workshop and reach out for support when needed. [LINK TO ON CAMPUS RESOURCES/SUPPORTS LIST]

**Exercise 1.1:** Briefly write down what you hope to take away from this workshop. Do you feel that you already have a strong understanding of anti-oppression, or is this your first time coming across the concept? Are there any specific topics that you would like to learn about? Hold on to these reflections and compare it to your reflections on what you have learned at the end.

**What is Oppression?** (audio recording)

**Exercise 1.2:** What images come to mind you think of oppression? Have you encountered the concept before?

**Definition:** Oppression
Oppression is the act of one social group using power or privilege for its own benefit while disempowering, marginalizing, and subordinating another group. There are often said to be three kinds of oppression: systemic/institutional, individual/interpersonal, and internalized/epistemological. We will go through basic definitions of each of these forms of oppression.

**Systemic/Institutional Oppression:**
Systemic oppression describes a network of institutions, policies, and practices that create
advantages and benefits for some while perpetuating discrimination, oppression, and disadvantages for others. Institutions are organized bodies such as companies, governments, prisons, police, schools, courts, health-care systems, and other non-governmental organizations. Oppression occurs when institutional policies, practices, and rules function to disempower some while benefitting others. It is critical to recognize that systemic oppression is historical, where forms of oppression have persisted over time and have been embedded in social structures. A person’s experience with systemic oppression, as we will see, is shaped by their multiple and intersecting identities.

**Interpersonal/Individual Oppression:**
Interpersonal oppression occurs when individuals engage in oppressive behavior against another person or a group of people. This form of oppression includes acts such as direct violence and attacks, insults, harassment, discrimination, or more subtle micro-aggressions and microinsults. This form of oppression is often easiest to recognize and is what many people imagine oppression to be.

**Epistemological/Internalized Oppression:**
Epistemology is the theory and study of knowledge. In an institutional context, it looks like the existence of dominant forms of knowledge, which functions to erase and devalue the knowledge produced by marginalized people. A prominent example would be eurocentrism. Furthermore, dominant power and knowledge makes it so that social oppression is internally accepted as normal and justified for those who perpetrate oppression (and sometimes even for folks who experience oppression as well). We may also describe oppression as ‘internalized’ to describe the fact that many people may hold oppressive beliefs or values in which they do not necessarily recognize as being harmful or oppressive.

**Overt and Covert types of Oppression**

**Overt oppression:**
Overt oppression consists of intentional and obviously harmful actions/comments towards marginalized people. They are said to be ‘overt’ because they are the easiest forms of oppression to recognize. They are what many people believe oppression is. Overt oppression tends to be regarded as socially illegitimate, meaning that many people can easily condemn it and tend to see themselves to be good people as a result.

**Covert oppression:**
Covert oppression is oppression that is often concealed and more subtle. It includes acts that restrict and deny marginalized people the same equality as those who are privileged. Covert oppression can takes on a number of different forms. Covert oppression is described as more socially legitimate than overt oppression, exactly because people do not see it as oppression. Prominent examples include micro-aggressions, ‘colourblind’ ideologies, cultural appropriation, and tokenism.
**Exercise 1.3:** How have you navigated overt and covert types of oppression in the past? What forms of overt and covert types of oppression have you witnessed, participated in, or were on the receiving end of? What do you think are some overt and covert types of oppression that show up in your club/society functions?

**Microaggressions**

Microaggressions are defined as brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities that function to communicate hostile, derogatory, and negative slights towards historically marginalized groups. Often, they manifest as more subtle, indirect, or unintentional forms of discrimination, which is why we describe them as being ‘micro’, despite the fact that for the people experiencing them, they are aggressive. In general, microaggressions are comments or attitudes that communicate that a marginalized person is different, does not belong, or is inferior by virtue of their identity.

**Power, Privilege, and Positionality**

**Exercise 1.4:** We pose, as a very broad question – why is there oppression? Why is it that certain groups are oppressed, while others are not? In thinking about why oppression exists, can you identify some historical events or ideas that are at the root of oppression? What are some current impacts, legacies, and manifestations of oppression?
History of Oppression (Audio recording #2)
The answer to the question of “why is there oppression” is complicated. It cannot be easily reduced to a short description or definition. It requires a great deal of historical context and involves a number of complicated concepts. Since we cannot adequately provide this in a short workshop, this section on the history of oppression should be supplemented by external learning and research. A link to our resource guide will be provided, and we encourage you to take additional time to educate yourselves.

An essential idea for you to recognize is that oppression is historical. That is, there is a reason why things are the way they are. Generally speaking, much of the oppression that exists today emerged in the ‘modern period’ (1550’s-1850’s) in Europe. And while some forms of oppression pre-dated this time, we can say that they certainly began to take on a more organized systemic character. That said, forms of oppression vary over the globe. We focus specifically on the roots of oppression in North America, with a particular emphasis on Canada, Nova Scotia, and Dalhousie University.

For thousands of years, various Indigenous nations inhabited the territory of North America, which they called “Turtle Island”. The formal period of European colonization is generally thought to have begun in 1492 with the arrival of Christopher Columbus, lasting into the early 1900’s when European empires colonized the continent of Africa. Canada and the United States were established through European colonialization and imperialism, which involved genocide and erasure of Indigenous peoples for the purpose of extracting wealth for European nations.

The system of settler-colonialism operated in tandem with the system of chattel slavery, in which enslaved African people were forcibly brought to North America to labour in colonial economies through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Underpinning the genocide of Indigenous people and the enslavement of African people was the phenomenon of white supremacy. White supremacy is a complex structural feature. Put simply, it is an ideology of hierarchy in which whiteness is positioned as superior, and where racialization is equated to inferiority.

Modern white supremacy – as a set of ideas and power relationships – emerged alongside the economic system of capitalism. The conditions produced by the intersection of white supremacy and capitalism is called racial capitalism. The connections between racism and economic exploitation is clear: underpinning the colonization of Indigenous land and the enslavement of Black bodies was the motive of profit. Racial capitalism depends on the ongoing accumulation of profit, and can only do so by reproducing relations of racial inequality.

Through settler-colonialism, European familial structures, power dynamics, and gender norms such as patriarchy, heterosexism, and cissexism (among others) were imposed upon colonized peoples. That is not to say that certain power dynamics did not exist did not prior to European colonization. Patriarchy, for example, is not a distinctly European idea. However, the particular forms of the European gender norms familiar structures imposed through colonization were
distinct. In settler-colonial societies such as Canada, the legacies of these oppressive structures have lasted into the present, and are at the root of present-day violence against 2SLGBTQ+ peoples.

The purpose of this is to highlight the functional and historical relationship between forms of oppression such as white supremacy, settler colonialism, slavery, and capitalism. These structures have continued to exist into the present. While their local manifestations may be different, their basic principles remain the same. The legacy of these power dynamics persists, which is why we say that oppression is historical.

**Power**

*Exercise 1.5: Who do you think holds power – and who do you think doesn’t? When you think of something as being powerful, what kinds of images come to mind? What embodies power? Conversely, what embodies powerlessness?*

This history of oppression demonstrates the existence and interconnectedness of power relationships. Going forward, it is important to provide a clear definition of power, in order to contribute to our anti-oppression framework. Power, in a most fundamental way, a relationship of hierarchy and subordination. The idea of “dominant power” describes a specific social group who possesses the ability to control land, resources, labour and to dictate social norms for their own benefit. Consequently, oppression can be described as the unjust conditions produced by dominant power. Power is something that is fought over and contested: those social groups who hold ‘dominant power’ do not have it by virtue of entitlement or right, but because specific historical circumstances have allowed them to consolidate control over it. Therefore, power can and should actively be challenged.

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a theory that originates in Black Feminist scholarship, which posits that we need to fundamentally account for the intersecting and interconnected features of oppression. Intersectionality argues that social categorizations such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, create interdependent systems of social discrimination and disadvantage. A person’s identity in relation to these intersecting factors will subsequently shape their lived experiences with oppression. Intersectionality should not be secondary or an afterthought; rather, it must be fundamentally constitutive to the way we think and the way that we relate to one another. In other words, this means that an intersectional lens and framework needs to shape how we see the world in a foundational way.

*Exercise 1.6: Intersectionality word association exercise: Using an intersectional framework, match each term with their appropriate definition.*

**Positionality and Social Location**
**Definition:** Positionality

Positionality is the multiple social identities that a person holds. Any given person may hold multiple privileged and marginalized identities according to their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other social categories. Positionality is the social space that we occupy in relation to other people, which is why it is also commonly referred to as your social location.

Positionality is not just an idea but something that we practice. It means identifying and reflecting on our own social positions, and thinking about the ways that they may differ from those of other people. By being more conscious of the space we occupy in society, we can be more responsive to the needs and experiences of folks from marginalized communities.

Positionality is necessarily connected to the idea of privilege. Due to the historical legacy of oppression, certain social groups are systematically marginalized. Just as oppressed people don’t choose to be marginalized, people don’t necessarily choose to be privileged, but benefit from this privilege nonetheless. A critical step when working to be anti-oppressive is identifying your social locations that are privileged, and reflecting on how they may have influenced your life, your experiences, and your identity. You cannot change your privileged social locations, but you can change the way that you use them.

**Exercise 1.7:** The following is a series of questions which asks you to identify the various social locations that you occupy. This list is not exhaustive but offers a starting point for reflection. You may find the questions in the workbook.

**Exercise 1.8:** What are questions that made you reflect in ways you may not have before? What questions resonated with you? What questions should be added to this list?

**What is Anti-Oppression?**

Anti-oppression means actively identifying and challenging all forms of oppression. While the next two sessions will go into greater detail about how you, as club and society leaders, can practice anti-oppression, it is important to begin with a basic definition.

**SESSION 1 QUIZ**

1. The three (intersecting) forms of oppression are:
   - a. Systemic, interpersonal, intersectional
   - b. Social, physical, cognitive
   - c. Systemic, interpersonal, epistemological
d. Environmental, physical, social

2. Provide a definition of intersectionality, and briefly describe its importance:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Name two systemic phenomena at the root of present-day oppression:

________________________________________

Answers: white supremacy, settler colonialism, patriarchy, cis-genderism, heterosexism or heteronormativity, ableism, classism, fatphobia

4. Positionality is the idea that various people occupy different ‘social locations’ according to their race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic background, citizenship status, religion, and ability.
   a. TRUE
   b. FALSE

5. Anti-oppression is the practice of:
   a. Learning about oppression
   b. Challenging oppression when you see it
   c. Identifying and challenging all forms of oppression
   d. Not believing that oppression exists

Session 2: Current and Local Contexts
Oppression in Canada, Nova Scotia, and Dalhousie University

History of Oppression

Exercise 2.1: Have you learnt about the history of oppression in so-called Canada and Nova Scotia? Where did you learn it? What did you learn? How was it taught? Do you think that this teaching was adequate?
Exercise 2.2: Shade or check each circle to identify whether you previously have encountered a historical fact or concept related to Canada, Nova Scotia’s and Dalhousie’s history of oppression. Don’t worry if you haven’t heard of something before – this exercise is for you to learn and self-reflect, not to be evaluated on.

Anti-Black Racism

- Did you know that many of early-eighteenth century Halifax’s leading families and social and political leaders were pro-slavery, Confederacy supporters?
- Did you know that the man who founded Dalhousie University, of George Ramsay the 9th Earl of Dalhousie, was racist toward Africans and their descendants?
- Did you know that Dalhousie College and other Nova Scotia’s provincial institutions and infrastructure were created, in part, with revenue from slavery-based economies?
- Did you know that some enslaved Black people actually escaped pre-Confederation Canada to seek freedom in the Northern American states in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in a migration that has been called the “reverse underground railroad”?
- Did you know that the Ku Klux Klan and other white nationalists were active forces in Canada? By 1922, there were Klan members in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Québec, with as many as 25,000 KKK members in the country.
- Did you know that the last racially segregated school in Canada closed in 1983?
- Did you know that in the city of Halifax, Black people were six times more likely to be stopped and questioned, or “carded” by police than white people? (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Street Check Report, March 2019)

Anti-Indigeneity

- Did you know that the French, who were the first European nation to colonize parts of Canada (called New France), enslaved Indigenous people?
- Did you know that after his re-election in 1878, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald orchestrated a state-sanctioned famine for Indigenous communities in the Canadian Prairies, in order to force relocation onto reserves and to facilitate colonization by white settlers?
Did you know that there were enforced segregation policies that restricted Indigenous peoples’ movements from 1885 to the mid 1950’s under a “pass system”, in which they had to have special permission to leave reserves?

Did you know that the last residential school didn’t close until 1996?

Did you know that at any given time, some 100 First Nations communities are under boil water advisories?

Did you know that Indigenous children (aged 0-14) account for approximately 7.7% of Canada’s population, but represent 52.2% of children in foster care?

Did you know that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be to be missing or murdered than any other women in Canada?

Anti-2SLGBTQ+

Did you know that in 1841, the Canadian Criminal Code began to impose the death penalty for all persons engaging in same-sex sexual relationships?

Did you know that in the 1950’s and 1960’s, the RCMP began to keep a list of all known homosexual people in some Canadian cities, with the purpose of forcing them out of government jobs, denying them promotions, and to track people who crossed the US border?

Did you know that the criminalization of homosexuality in Canada did not end until 1969?

Did you know that while it is prohibited in some provinces and municipalities, conversion therapy is not yet fully prohibited across Canadian law?

State Violence (Audio Recording #3)

**Exercise 2.3:** Have you heard the term ‘state violence’ before? Why is state violence important to identify in the context of anti-oppression? What is the state?

State violence is a form of systemic oppression. The state is defined as a network of institutions, such as federal, provincial and municipal government, the judicial system (including the country’s laws, courts, prison’s), education and social-welfare systems, the police, and any other state-influenced institution. The Canadian state is a combination of all these institutions.

State agencies, such as education systems, social-welfare agencies, and healthcare institutions, also have the power to oppress that is generally only thought to belong to the police. These institutions police too: they surveil, confine, control and punish — the behavior of marginalized people. State violence, especially in its more covert forms, is often not regarded as violence.

The power dynamics of the Canadian state has direct impacts on who is the victim of state violence. Since the emergence of the Canadian state, the people who have been the victims of
state violence have been determined by race/ethnicity, immigration status, economic background, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion. Those considered to be in ‘dominant power’ are rarely, if ever, the victims of state violence.

Examples of state violence are numerous in Canadian history. The history of residential schools, which were overseen by churches and education systems, are an example of state violence against Indigenous people. The fact that Indigenous children are disproportionately in child welfare services is another example of state violence that persists in the present. On a more local level, the removal and displacement of the community of Africville in Halifax is another example of state violence.

Why is it important? When people think of oppression and violence, they often only think in terms of the most obvious, overt forms of oppression. Since state power is often seen as legitimate, people may not always recognize the states actions as violent. It is critical to shed light on these phenomena, as we go about building our anti-oppressive knowledge and frameworks.

**Systemic Oppression at Dalhousie University**

Dalhousie has a long history of systemic oppression. The oppression that has occurred at the school is a product of global systems of oppression such as white supremacy, settler colonialism, and patriarchy. In turn, these global systems have had specific local consequences in Nova Scotia and at Dalhousie.

The University was established on unceded and unsurrendered Mi’kmaq territory, and contributed to the colonization and displacement of Indigenous people. From historical documents, we know that the University’s Founder, Lord Dalhousie, held deeply racist beliefs and attitudes. There were very few, if any, women admitted into the university for more than a century, nor was it a welcoming or safe place for 2SLGBTQ+ people.

This history of oppression continues to exist in the present, although in different forms. Oppression has not gone away, it has merely changed. That said, things have gotten better: there is much more inclusion, acceptance, and diversity at the University. However, we must recognize that there is still a long way to go, and that we can collectively play a role in combatting oppression in our communities.

**Discrimination at Dal**

Discrimination at Dal (@discriminationatdal) is an Instagram page dedicated to shining a spotlight on the various manifestations of discrimination at Dalhousie University. The page allows for anonymous submissions of instances of discrimination and narrates them in a powerful first voice. The following Discrimination at Dalhousie Instagram posts provide
examples of the ongoing presence of oppression at the school. They demonstrate the intersecting features of oppression, and the way in which structural oppression creates the parameters for individual oppression to occur.

Other Examples of Oppression
Given the multitude of experiences, there are many examples of oppression. The following non-exhaustive list provides examples to illustrate the many ways that oppression manifests in our campuses.

- The limited availability of courses on Black/Indigenous studies
- Eurocentrism in curriculum
- The limited number of BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ+ represented among professors (and administration)
- A culture of sexism, homophobia, misogyny, transphobia, and sexualized violence in some communities that is enabled by structural oppression
- A lack of accessibility for those with differing-abilities
- Discrimination against 2SLGBTQ+ people, particularly transgender, non-binary, two-spirit, and other gender non-conforming individuals. On an individual level, this may manifest in lack of respect for a person's pronouns, transphobic comments or gestures, and the use of gender binaries in a way that discounts the experience and identity of transgender, non-binary, two spirit, and gender non-conforming people.

Exercise 2.4: Have you heard of, witnessed, participated in, or experienced oppression at Dalhousie? How did it impact you and others in the situation? How did you address the situation? What supports did you utilize? How can you proactively address similar issues when in your position of leadership?

Exercise 2.5: Have you heard of, witnessed, participated in, or experienced oppression at Dalhousie? How did it impact you and others in the situation? How did you address the situation? What supports did you utilize? How can you proactively address similar issues when in your position of leadership?

SESSION 2 QUIZ:

1. A commonly-held belief is that forms of oppression in Canada (both in the past and in the present) are not “as bad” as they are in the United States. Given what you have learned, do you think that this is true?
   A. True
   B. False

2. State violence and overt oppression are the same thing.
   A. True
   B. False

3. Provide one brief example of oppression that occurs at Dalhousie University. If you have personally experienced oppression at the school and feel comfortable sharing your
experiences, you may do so.

4. Is your chosen example fall into covert or overt oppression? Why?

5. Can you briefly identify the individual, systemic, and epistemological aspects of this example?

Session 3: Decolonization and Liberation
Applying an Anti-Oppressive Lens to Club & Society Affairs

What is Decolonization?

Learning about and contributing to decolonization must be a necessary part of our anti-oppression framework. Decolonization is defined by the practice of identifying and deconstructing the way that settler-colonialism persists in our society, institutions, and in our minds. Decolonization requires us to dismantle structures of oppression and unequal power dynamics which contributes to violence against Indigenous people.

What does decolonization look like? For one, it involves valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and approaches. This is especially critical in the University context, where colonial education systems have privilege western european thought while marginalizing Indigenous experiences and ways of knowing.

Decolonization is an ongoing process that requires all of us to be collectively involved and responsible. Decolonizing our institutions means we create spaces that are inclusive, respectful, and which honour Indigenous Peoples and our relational obligations as treaty people.
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Actions offers concrete direction for institutions, including academic institutions, to practice reconciliation and move towards decolonization. Take the time to read through these calls to action and reflect on the ways in which you as an individual, and in your role as a club & society leader, can contribute to decolonization.

http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

**Exercise 3.1:** Can you identify the ways in which you club or society might exhibit features of settler-colonialism? How might you contribute to decolonization at Dalhousie (and in Canadian society broadly) through your role as a club and society leader?

**What is Liberation? (Audio Recording)**

**Exercise 3.2:** Write down words that you associate with the term ‘liberation’. Can you reflect on what liberation means, and why it’s important in the context of anti-oppression?

Liberation is freedom from oppression. If dominant power is the ability to control land, labor, resources and knowledge, liberation is when people fight so that power is distributed more equally and justly. Liberation is not about giving oppressed people power at the expense of another group, reproducing oppression. Instead, liberation is about envisioning a society that is not governed by hierarchy, inequality, and by unequal power relationships. Liberation is authentic freedom.

Since we know that oppression occurs in a systemic, interpersonal, and epistemological way which are often intersecting, then liberation needs to occur in systemically, interpersonally, and epistemologically. In other words, we need to recognize and challenge all forms of oppression, not just some. This is why an intersectional framework is so important; it allows us to identify the intersecting and interconnected features of oppression.

How do we begin? Liberation, in many ways, begins in people’s minds. It is about challenging and reflecting critically on our deepest, most internalized beliefs. This learning occurs socially; we learn by forming relationships with other people, by being willing to learn, and by being open to making mistakes and being corrected.

If liberation begins in our minds, it must take concrete form in our interpersonal relationships. By building relationships based out of kindness, equality and non-hierarchy, we contribute towards liberation. This interpersonal impact then has broader community-based, or social consequences.

Liberation shifts from the interpersonal to the societal. As individuals, we must work in communities to build people’s power, challenging all forms of oppression. By building
community networks, we attempt to rebuild institutions in a way that is free from oppression. By working building healthier, more equal communities which are not governed by the influence of oppression, we are doing the work of challenging systemic oppression as individuals within communities.

**Practicing Anti-Oppression as Individuals**

As individuals, there are things that you can do to practice anti-oppression on a daily basis. The following is a non-exhaustive of strategies, tips and important elements of practicing anti-oppression.

**General tips:**
- Reflect on your assumptions, attitudes, behaviors, and biases.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions, but be mindful of how they might come across
- Be conscious of the space that you are taking up
- Learn to see outside your own experiences and perspectives
- Learn skills for self-reflection and interpersonal accountability
- Challenge those who marginalize and harm others
- Be open and willing to change when you are corrected
- Be kind, compassionate and supportive of others
- Educate yourself on the history of oppression
- Integrate this knowledge into your work
- Provide informed support for those who have or are experiencing oppression

**Anti-Oppression and Dalhousie Societies**

**Establishing safer spaces:**

**Exercise 3.3:** What do people think of when they hear the word safe space? What are safer spaces, and why are they important in the context of a club and society? What kinds of attitudes and behaviors contribute to the existence of safer spaces? How might you make your club and society a safer space?

**Definition:** Safer Spaces

Safer spaces are environments, whether in a classroom, a club & society, or in a group of friends, where people feel comfortable, supported, and respected. A safer space is where people feel that they can be authentically themselves, and don’t fear judgement, criticism, or rejection. A safer space is something that is made and maintained by people in a social setting. It occurs by listening to other people, being open, compassionate, not interrupting or not speaking on behalf of other people, not generalizing your own experiences, thinking critically about the way your behaviors affect others, and being open to making changes if someone ever
corrects you. As leaders of a club and society, it is important for you to ensure that the environment you are fostering is an inclusive, accepting and safe place for all people.

**Exercise 3.4:** Can you identify specific examples of what oppression might look like in the context of your club & society? In the context of your club & society, how might you go about addressing and challenging this oppression?

A non-exhaustive list of examples includes:
- Targeting a person, whether through harmful remarks, gossip, or by ignoring or excluding, due to a feature of their identity (racial, gender/sexual, other)
- Discounting the knowledge, experience and contributions of marginalized people. Only listening to those who conform to a narrow set of experiences
- A lack of diversity in terms of who is on executives, despite having had many diverse candidates
- People who abuse their power, perpetrating various forms of oppression while not being held accountable for their actions
- A toxic culture in which people do not challenge the problematic behavior of others
- and more

**Practice Challenging Oppression in the Context of a Club and Society**

The following section provides a set of potential scenarios in a club & society where participants must respond to an oppressive incident using an anti-oppression framework.

(Recording)

Scenario: You are at a social event for all members of your club and society. The subject of the conversation turns to recent political events in Canada and the United States. The majority of members are being respectful, speaking in turn, and are sharing the common sentiment that policy brutality and anti-black racism are endemic problems in our society. One of the more recent members of the society interjects, cutting someone off, and abruptly makes a comment many interpret to be racist. There are several BIPOC folks present in the room who hear the comment, and who seem hurt and shocked. The room falls into an awkward silence. As leaders of the club and society, what do you think would be an appropriate response?

It’s important to recognize that every situation is different. There isn’t necessarily a fixed model to use to respond; rather, you must use your best judgement, and follow general anti-oppression principles to guide your actions. In this moment, it is important to condemn the person’s comment. By allowing this comment to go unaddressed, ie. by being silent, you are tacitly endorsing it. A good response in the moment might be “Please keep comments like those to yourself”, or “Hate like that isn’t welcome here”. Being anti-oppressive is about fostering a
A social environment that is free from oppression, and it is done by statements which clearly establish boundaries in terms of equality and inclusion.

Following the event, you should have a conversation with the individual who made the comments. While it is not necessarily your responsibility to change their political beliefs, you absolutely need to convey to them the importance of being considerate and respectful in social spaces. You should tell them that they should keep their beliefs to themselves, since they have resulted in people being harmed. They should be warned that if something similar were to happen again, that they could be removed from the group - or, depending on the nature of the comment, more serious sanctions may be necessary. You should also have a conversation with those BIPOC individuals. The most important thing to do in this situation is to listen to what they want to do, to their experiences and perspectives. Don’t act without their approval, and don’t speak on behalf of them, especially if you are not BIPOC. If they would like a formal apology from the individual, you should try to have that person apologize. All of this would be made easier if your club or society had established policies and procedures which provide a framework when addressing incidents of oppression.

Fostering Anti-Oppressive Clubs and Societies: Inclusive Events

There are many things to take into consideration when organizing an event. The planning decisions you make have a direct impact on the inclusivity of an event, and so it is critical to reflect on the implications of these decisions. While this inclusive event planning guide provides a starting point for these discussions, it’s important to recognize that inclusion should not be reduced to a simple checklist. Rather, it is essential important to recognize the unique challenges and barriers that your community may face, and to work to mitigate them on an ongoing basis.

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

- Ensure advertising and promotion is reflective of diverse experiences
- Connect with community groups and units to help promote your event to groups you may not necessarily be reaching
- [Include Disability Access Symbols] in flyers and promotional materials

FOOD

- Give participants the opportunity to identify dietary needs ahead of time
- Provide culturally appropriate food options including Halal and Kosher options
- Provide vegetarian and vegan options
- Avoid, or provide alternatives to, food containing common allergens (peanuts, dairy, shellfish, gluten, etc.)
- Provide sugar-free options for individuals with health concerns such as diabetes
o Ensure assistance is available for individuals with visual or physical disabilities if food will be served buffet style
o Provide full ingredient lists for meals and food options

LOCATION

o Ensure the location is accessible via transit
o Ensure adequate airflow and lighting for the amount of people attending and consider the potential impacts of noise, body heat, chemical sensitivity triggers, etc.
○ Ensure that signage is clear and posted in a way that is easily visible to everyone

MATERIALS

○ Provide materials in a variety of formats including hard copies, digital files, video and/or audio files whenever possible.

STRUCTURE

o Establish mechanisms for navigating incidences of discrimination and harassment (ex: policies, )
○ Clearly identify leaders and support people

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

○ Identify the Indigenous territory where the event is taking place and ensure it is properly acknowledged
○ Arrange to have an Indigenous Elder from the territory to provide a welcome or blessing at the beginning of the event (Ensure an appropriate gift of thanks is offered – see Protocol)

RACE AND ETHNICITY

○ Avoid tokenistic representation of racialized people and ethnic groups
○ Avoid planning events on dates that coincide with important religious holidays or cultural times
○ Translate materials into multiple languages commonly spoken in the community
○ Provide interpretation services if required

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

○ Use gender inclusive language (Ex: avoid binaries such as “ladies and gentlemen” and instead use terms such as “esteemed guests”)
○ Ensure that there are gender inclusive washrooms available and that participants have been advised of its location
○ Allow participants to self-identify their name and pronouns
○ Identify and respect pronoun usage
o Eliminate activities that separate people into gendered categories

**ACCESSIBILITY**

o Visit the space before booking an event and ensure that it is physically accessible
o Ensure that there is a wheelchair accessible washroom available (including a door that swings outwards, a grab bar, and adequate space for mobility devices), and that participants have been advised of its location
o Ensure adequate accessible parking spots are available close to the entrance of the building
o Ensure there is adequate barrier-free pathways for navigation by wheelchairs, assistance animals, or other mobility-related devices
o Include captioning on any film or video materials
o Provide a sign language interpreter if required
o Ensure spaces without chairs are available for individuals using wheelchairs or scooters but avoid designating a space specifically for wheelchair use, as this segregates participants and limits the opportunity for wheelchair users to sit with friends.

o Affordability can be a barrier to access and should be considered

**Closing Reflections**

**Exercise 3.5:** Return to your responses to the question “What do you hope to take away from this workshop?” Having completed this workshop, is there anything that you have learned that you didn’t know before? Do you feel like this training was valuable? Do you feel that, with this knowledge, you will be able to execute the duties of your club and society using an anti-oppression framework?

**Feedback**

The following section is for you to provide feedback on this anti-oppression training. At Human Rights and Equity Services, we are constantly working to ensure that our educational work is the most effective and up-to-date as possible. Therefore, we appreciate any feedback on how to improve this anti-oppression programming.

**SESSION 3 QUIZ:**

1. Briefly describe decolonization, and speak to its importance:  
   _________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
2. Liberation involves envisioning a society that is not governed by hierarchy, inequality, and by unequal power relationship:
   a. TRUE
   b. FALSE

3. Safer spaces are:
   a. A place where people feel like they can be authentically themselves
   b. A space where people are compassionate, non-judgmental and supportive
   c. When someone listens to another person’s perspective without interrupting or talking over them
   d. All of the above

4. Which of the following is not a way to practice anti-oppression in your daily life?
   A. Learn skills for self-reflection and interpersonal accountability
   B. Learn to see outside your own experiences and perspectives
   C. Always put yourself first
   D. Educate yourself on the history of oppression

5. Provide one example of something that your club & society currently does to make events inclusive, and another example of something that you could do differently.

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________