

The Gift We Give One Another: A Community Agreement Resource from the BCcampus Anti-Racism Anti-Hate Working Group

These community agreements are designed to help us navigate the inevitable challenges and unforeseeable gifts that arise when people gather, work, and build community together. They are intended to be “alive” — to change over time and adapt to needs that arise within the social environment of the working group.

Throughout our time together, we commit to:

Taking, giving, and receiving care

- We stay aware of our own needs, take measures to care for ourselves, and ask for support when needs arise that are better (or only) met in relationships/community with others.
- We make our boundaries known and take space or delegate responsibilities when needed.
- We stay sensitive to the needs of group members, and when possible and appropriate, we take steps to support others in meeting their needs.

Adapting to emergent needs

- We stay open to ways of thinking, doing, and relating that may emerge or recede over time as trust builds within the group.
- We resource from within the group when possible and access external resources and support as needed. This may take the form of sharing facilitation, using decision-making tools that arise from group members, or following the lead of people with specific skills that may help to guide through a particular process.
- We stay present in the midst of instability and unpredictability, knowing this can be fertile ground from which the changes we are seeking can grow.

Maintaining clarity of purpose

- We've all been brought together by our shared purpose of informing and shaping this anti-racism/anti-hate initiative. While the group — and the path we take — will

evolve along the way, we will stay on topic and work toward our collective purpose and goals. We will reorient each other toward this shared purpose if conversations get derailed or momentum gets dispersed.

- We honour scheduled start and stop times for our gatherings and meetings.

Mindfully sharing stories and experiences

- We acknowledge our own histories, traumas, strengths, triggers, growth edges, and pain points. We take responsibility for our beliefs, feelings, and actions, and we acknowledge how all these factors will affect how we show up, connect, and contribute to the group. This could mean letting people know in advance or checking in with the group if we wish to share something particularly personal or traumatic. At the same time, we acknowledge that what is considered triggering, activating, or emotionally charged is highly subjective. For example, being a marginalized person and experiencing the violence of systemic oppression is traumatic, but our lives, experiences, and stories are not inherently triggering because of this.
- We actively balance that we are the experts of our own lives while staying true to the collective nature of knowledge, experiences, and stories, even when they are told by one voice. We speak for ourselves (“I” statements) to resist reductionism, overgeneralization, and tokenization. We speak on behalf of the communities who have raised us and the communities who have claimed us (“We” statements) to explore how systemic racism and other systemic oppressions can have consistent and persistent consequences on members of BIPOC communities.
- We avoid sharing the personal or private experiences of others without their consent.

Equitably sharing space and time

- We work to consciously create space for everyone to offer their input. We pay attention to who has had the opportunity to contribute and in what ways, and we actively address dominant power dynamics if/when they arise within the group.
- When we catch ourselves and one another withholding perspectives, we open the door for those perspectives to be shared, either by speaking up ourselves or inviting others to speak. If we don't know what we think yet, we offer even that so no one is left wondering about our silence.

Honouring complexity and staying accountable

- We fight against the "logic" of systemic oppression by deeply understanding and embracing the complexities of intersectionality and rejecting binary ways of thinking. Examples of binaries that may arise in our work are:
 - Either/or thinking
 - Process/outcomes
 - I (individual)/We (collective)
 - Patience/urgency
 - Intention/impact
 - Good/bad
 - Simplicity/complexity
 - Convergence (coming together)/divergence (coming apart)
 - Those who harm/are harmed

- Everyone is capable of perpetuating power dynamics and oppression. When harm is committed, we ask why and explore the root causes. We do not use our trauma or other forms of oppression to shield ourselves from accountability.
- We educate in the spirit of solidarity and hold others accountable for their behaviour without criticizing who they are as people. We acknowledge oppression and share a collective desire to heal to move forward.
- We give each other grace, knowing the work of undoing oppressions is difficult, messy, and imperfect. We receive corrections, reminders, or education from others graciously by responding first with “Thanks.”

Take note if any of these agreements strike you as something you would like to steward going forward as part of your contribution to this working group.

Resources and References

- **Institute for the Development of Human Arts**
<https://www.idha-nyc.org/community-agreements>
- **Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance**
https://arts-campout-2015.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2019/02/AORTA_Facilitation-Resource-Sheet-JUNE2017.pdf
- **Alternate Roots**
<https://alternateroots.org/alternate-roots-community-agreements/>

Cities & People article by Laurie Jones Neighbours

<https://citiesandpeople.com/ljnc-blog/2019/6/28/this-is-about-community-agreements-and-shared-leadership-and-systems-of-oppression>



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