

# Anti-Oppression Capacity Building Project: Evaluation Report



MARCH 2024

Submitted to: Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership

Submitted by: The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation

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## INTRODUCTION

The Anti-Oppression Capacity Building Project is a research project designed to test the use of an anti-oppression lens to build the capacity of immigrant-serving agencies to address systemic racism in the sector. This initiative provides immigrant-serving agencies or practitioners with the knowledge and competencies around anti-oppression in order for them to take actions to create change in the system. More specifically, it aims to enhance the capacity of practitioners in the settlement sector by offering training and coaching on anti-oppressive practices to see if and how it affects the quality of services offered to newcomers. This is a 29-month project (November 2021-March 2024) funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

## THE ISSUE — WHY IS IT NEEDED

Many groups are deprived of privileges and opportunities in today's society. This is known as systemic oppression. Oppression manifests itself economically, socially and politically due to discrimination biases and stereotypes. Oppression is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as an unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power.

In 2020, the Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership (TCLIP) launched its Diversity in Leadership project. Results from the project's stakeholder survey indicated many organizations identified needs on how to adopt equity and inclusion policies and practices; 50 per cent indicated their interest in deepening their understanding of the manifestations of racism within their policies and practices, and 57 per cent indicated the need for ongoing support, such as coaching and mentorship supports and implementation of anti-oppressive policies and practices. The implications from the project findings indicate the need for using a broad framework that integrates intersectionality and a range of ongoing supports such as coaching, workshops, mentorship and tool development to deepen current and future leaders' understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion.

While the concept of anti-oppression is prevalent in social education, research, policy, and frontline practice, it is relatively new in the settlement sector (DeCoito & Williams, 2000). The need to develop this capacity in the settlement sector is documented in Clarke & Wan's study *Transforming Settlement Work: From a Traditional to a Critical Anti-oppression Approach with Newcomer Youth in Secondary Schools*. They contend that the time has come to transform settlement work from the current traditional approach to an anti-oppression approach. While their study focused on newcomer youth, the framework also applies to settlement workers to better understand how they knowingly and unknowingly reproduce the oppression of newcomers in the courses of action they take in their daily work.

The delivery of services to newcomers is crucial, especially upon initial contact (Newbold & Danforth, 2003). Applying an anti-oppression lens in the settlement sector will create safer and empowering services that respect and are responsive to individual needs. As important as the settlement services offered to newcomers, so are their experiences receiving these services (George, 2000).

## WHAT IS THE PROJECT ABOUT

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project was designed to engage with immigrant-serving agencies in Metro Vancouver to increase their awareness, recognition and understanding of anti-oppression in settlement services at the systemic level through 1) anti-oppression capacity building workshops and 2) coaching in implementing anti-oppressive frameworks in policies and practices to staff. More specifically, it aims to enhance training participants' awareness of their own positions of power and privilege, how they reproduce oppression in services, and identify and challenge traditional colonial approaches in transforming the sector. In doing so, immigrant-serving agencies participating in the project will improve their anti-oppression capacity through greater knowledge and improved policies, programs and practices. Newcomers benefit from anti-oppression approaches to immigrant services as services have the potential to be more responsive to their diverse and intersecting needs, and ultimately lead to better settlement and integration outcomes.

The initial intent was to provide training only to agencies in Metro Vancouver. However, due to interest elsewhere in British Columbia, the project extended the training to a small number of agencies outside the Metro Vancouver area.

### OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal of the project is to test the effectiveness of an anti-oppression approach in building the capacity of immigrant-serving agencies to recognize and confront systemic racism.

The project aims to provide participating agencies/individuals with the needed knowledge and competencies around anti-oppression in order for organizations and individuals to take actions to create change in the system.

### PROJECT PARTNERS

TCLIP managed and provided oversight for the project, as well as developing and implementing stakeholder engagement in the project, which relied on TCLIP's strong established relationships with organizations and leaders who participated in their anti-racism projects, its working groups and other community organizations and members.

The Centre for Anti-Oppressive Communication<sup>1</sup> (CAOC) is a key partner in the project. The Centre is the subject-matter expert. The Centre developed and delivered workshops and coaching to training participants.

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is the evaluation and learning partner in the project.

The Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR) helped promote the project to their members and network.

## TARGET GROUPS

The capacity building education, training and supports are designed for two specific groups: frontline practitioners and leadership in immigrant serving organizations located in Metro Vancouver. TCLIP engaged and recruited interested individuals/organizations for the Anti-oppression training using its networks with multi-sectoral immigrant and non-immigrant agencies to recruit interested participants. The project delivered the training in a cohort format. It offered training to four cohorts and targeted 25 participants in each of the first two cohorts and 35 in the last two for a total of 120 trained individuals.

## KEY PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project consulted with agencies and practitioners that serve newcomers such as immigrant-serving organizations, community organizations, municipalities, education institutions and other organizations to learn more about existing knowledge and understanding of oppression, anti-oppression principles, as well as to identify barriers in the implementation of anti-oppression policies and practices. In addition, we engaged newcomers and immigrants in a focus group to better understand their experience with programs and services that met their unique and intersecting needs and experiences. The results informed the development of the capacity-building workshops and coaching activities to ensure it is relevant for training participants.

Following the development activities, the project through the Centre of Anti-Oppressive Communication delivered training and coaching to participants. The Centre adapted its introductory to Anti-Oppressive training for the project.

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<sup>1</sup> The Centre was founded by Tenniel Brown and specializes in providing anti-oppressive/trauma informed counselling, clinical supervision, and organizational consultation as well as customized workshops, trainings, and team retreats.



For each training cohort, the project delivered three on-line workshops over three months covering anti-oppression topics such as Anti-Oppressive Practice and Leadership, Unpacking Oppression, Anti-Oppressive Language and Terms, Tools for Recognizing Implicit Bias, and Tools for Discussions about Race and Racism. Training participants also received two discussion sessions delivered in small groups and one individual coaching session. These sessions were scheduled in between the workshops. The group discussions provided opportunities for peer support, continued dialogue and overall support in the adoption and application of anti-oppressive policies and practices in real world contexts. The individual coaching session was offered at the end. The project also developed resources and tools that can further help training participants apply their learnings.

**Figure 1**      **Sequence of training activities**



## WHAT WE ARE EVALUATING

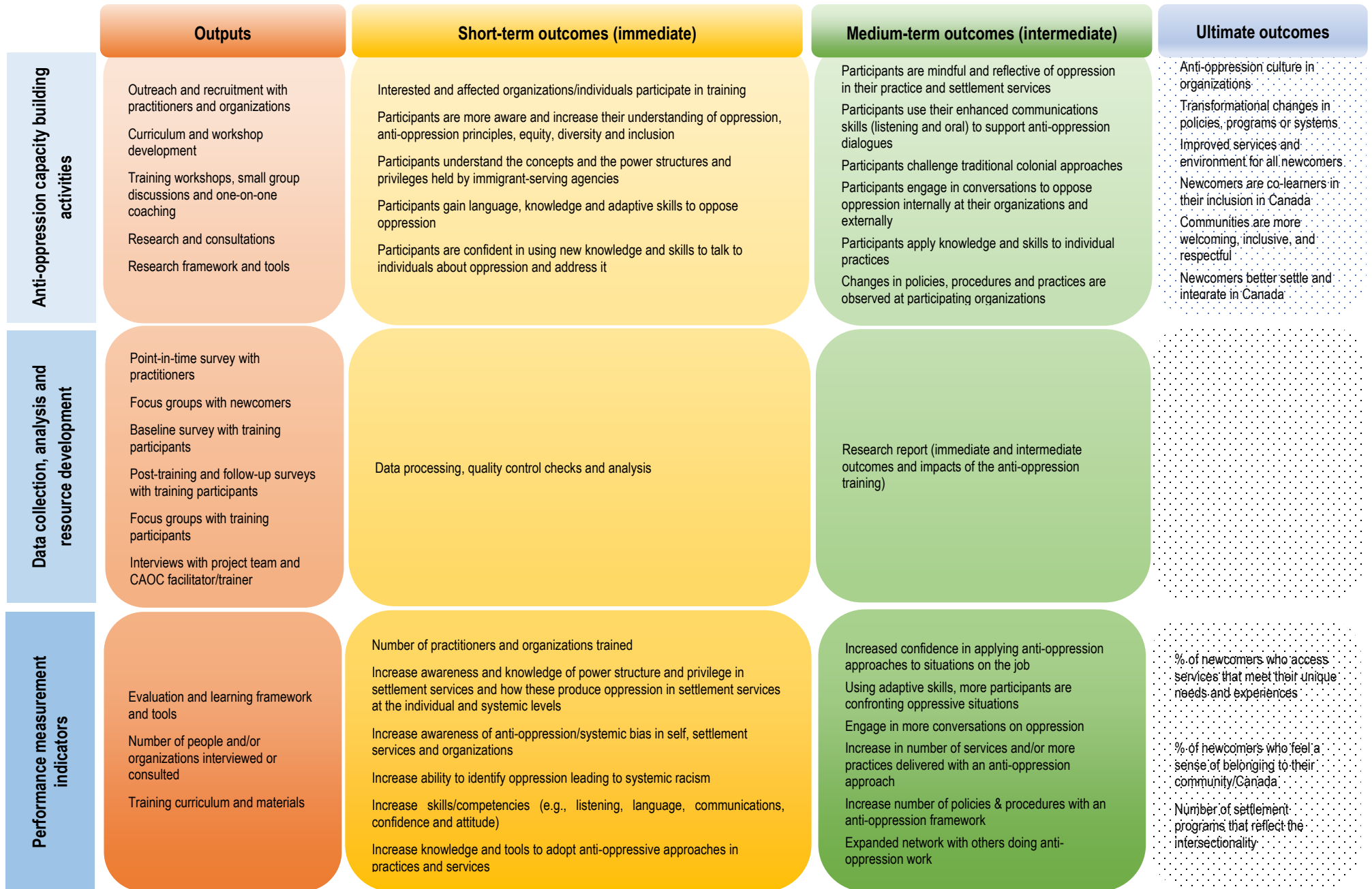
A key purpose of the project's capacity building activities is to increase awareness, knowledge and skills among front line practitioners and leaders at immigrant-serving agencies in order to address the intersecting needs of newcomers in their settlement journey. We want to learn not just about participants' experience with the project activities and the resulting skills acquisition, but also the outcomes – what did participants actively change? SRDC designed an evaluation of the initiative that will contribute to understanding the opportunities and challenges of using an anti-oppression approach with training and supports to address systemic racism in settlement services. The key objective of the evaluation is to understand the effectiveness of the capacity building activities, and how to improve them in order to achieve more efficient and sustained impacts.

The key evaluation questions are:

1. **Reaction** – Was the content and information relevant to their work? Did the training meet their needs?
2. **Learning** – To what degree did training participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills: Have participants gained knowledge, skills and tools that can be used to implement changes and influence programs and services? What capacities do participants develop from participating in project activities (confidence, commitment and attitude)?
3. **Behaviour** – What did participants do with the learned knowledge and gained skills? Are participants more mindful and reflective of oppression in settlement services and at their agencies? With the gains in language and skills, are participants more confident and equipped to engage and initiate conversations on oppression? What changes, if any, are participants making to their practices, policies, and procedures?

Figure 2 shows the expected outputs and outcomes for the initiative as well as the performance measurement indicators. The immediate outcomes are changes following the training activities. The intermediate outcomes are those that happen following the education and training and three months after completing the training. The ultimate outcomes noted in the diagram are reforms or transformational changes that will require more time and are expected beyond the project period; they have been included in the logic model to show the ultimate aims of the initiative.

**Figure 2** Logic Model for Anti-Oppression Capacity Building Project



## GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

The evaluation is guided by a Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) lens. GBA Plus is a method for examining how gender and other intersecting identity factors affect a person's experience with the project and the impacts of the project.

## DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation utilizes several data sources to answer the evaluation questions. The evaluation collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Data collection took place throughout the project, comprising of the data sources listed below.

### Surveys

#### *Point-in-time survey*

As part of the research and consultation, the project developed and administered an online survey to cross-sectional agencies that serve immigrants including settlement agencies, community service organizations, municipalities, and educational institutions in Metro Vancouver. The survey collected information to measure existing knowledge and understanding of oppression and anti-oppression principles as well as to identify barriers in the implementation of commitments to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. The results provided a snapshot of the overall knowledge and skills; the results were also used to inform the development of the capacity building workshops and coaching activities to ensure they are relevant and responsive to participants' needs.

#### *Surveys with training participants*

Baseline, post-training and 3-month follow-up surveys were administered to all training participants in the four cohorts. The baseline survey was administered before the start of the first training session. The post-training survey collected information on participants' experiences, usefulness of the information, knowledge, and skills gains and whether they intend to use the information in their workplace and practice, and how. The follow-up survey was administered three months after the training.

A total of 131 participants from 45 organizations enrolled for the anti-oppression training and attended at least one of the three training workshops. This exceeded the project target of 120 participants. Of the 131 participants, 84% completed the baseline survey. 67.3% of

participants who completed the baseline survey completed the post-training survey; similarly, 45.5% of participants completed the 3-month follow-up survey. Table 1 shows the enrollment numbers by cohort along with the completion rates for the selected surveys.

**Table 1 Training participants: number enrolled and numbers completing the surveys**

| Cohort | # of training participants enrolled | # completed baseline survey | # completed post-training survey | # completed 3-month follow-up survey |
|--------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1      | 28                                  | 23                          | 15                               | 10                                   |
| 2      | 37                                  | 36                          | 24                               | 15                                   |
| 3      | 40                                  | 34                          | 22                               | 17                                   |
| 4      | 26                                  | 17                          | 13                               | 8                                    |
| Total  | 131                                 | 110                         | 74                               | 50                                   |

## Interviews and focus group

### *Point-in-time focus groups*

Following the point-in-time survey, SRDC conducted a focus group with seven newcomers to get further insights and experiences to complement the findings from the point-in-time survey. We also spoke with practitioners attending the TCLIP Practitioner Forum in February 2022 to discuss their knowledge and experience with anti-oppression practices.

### *Focus groups with training participants*

In addition to surveys with training participants, focus groups with training participants were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with the intervention and outcomes achieved. We held three focus groups with training participants, one in each year of the intervention to gather this qualitative data. A total of 13 participants participated in the focus groups.

### *Interviews with project partners*

SRDC conducted three interviews with the Centre for Anti-oppressive Communications facilitator/trainer to learn about what is and what is not working, and improvements made over the project and why.

SRDC conducted annual interviews with project staff about what has worked well, areas that can be improved and any gaps that need to be addressed.

### *Administrative records*

Project administrative records provided participation figures such as the number of training participants/organizations, attendance at workshops, group discussions, and individual coaching supports received.

## WHAT HAPPENED

### IMPLEMENTATION

The project's main components and activities were implemented as planned, but some aspects fell short of initial expectations while others were enhanced.

The project team recruited their target number of training participants and organized and delivered four training cohorts as planned. The CAOC adapted its introductory anti-oppression training for the settlement sector and delivered to each cohort three workshops, two small discussion groups and one individual coaching session as planned. The content after the first cohort remained the same, but the interaction with participants increased in later cohorts.

The project team learned from training participants that they wanted concrete tools to take away from the training, to practice their learnings, and to apply to their work. While the training PowerPoint slides were not shared due to proprietary content, the CAOC separately developed a workbook that was shared with participants after their training ended. Responding to participants' requests for tools, TCLIP developed the following additional resources<sup>2</sup> to complement and support participants' learning:

- “Join the Conversation” anti-oppression tool kit
- Trauma-informed practices in your role video
- Anti-oppression in program design video.

In addition to these tools, the project team also organized additional events for training participants and non-participants to learn from other subject matter experts and expand their networks with others doing anti-oppression work. The project team organized and delivered seven virtual and in-person events, including two workshop series with multiple events over the course of the project. Topics included implementing an anti-oppressive lens at work, facilitating caring spaces, supporting relationships between newcomers and Indigenous Peoples, boundary practices, and a celebration event to wrap up this project.

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<sup>2</sup> Resources can be found at <https://tricitieclip.ca/priorities-and-projects/our-projects/anti-oppression-capacity-building-project/>.

Additionally, after hearing from training participants about the importance of buy-in from senior leadership in order to make organization-level changes, the project team sought to recruit entirely of management and executives for the last cohort. However, only about 38% of that cohort held manager or executive positions, with another 10% holding frontline supervisor positions. The project team echoed what we heard from participants that some leaders didn't have the capacity to engage in the training, that they wanted asynchronous delivery because they could not commit to participating in so many live sessions, and that they believed it was the job of frontline staff to attend this type of training. In fact, some of the leaders who were invited to participate in this cohort sent other staff to attend instead. Moreover, the project team recognized that most of the leaders who attended and bought in to the project were already more open to anti-oppressive perspectives and approaches, and that they themselves encountered the resistance to change that participants also mentioned as a challenge to making changes at their organizations.

*“It would need to be a completely different project, and structure, and everything....bringing senior leadership to the table... in a way that is empathic and not oppressive, and doesn't put the onus on the frontline workers once again.”*

From the evaluation side of the project, the survey response rates, while adequate, did not show high levels of motivation to complete the surveys. 67.3% of participants who completed the baseline survey completed the post-training survey, and 45.5% completed the 3-month follow-up survey. For the first cohort of the training, participants were told that the surveys were voluntary, and received survey reminders. For subsequent cohorts, participants were told that the surveys were mandatory, but there were no consequences for lack of completion. Linking survey completion to receiving the training certificate could have helped increase the response rate.

The project team agreed that while the training was successful in creating changes at the individual level, this was often not enough to create systemic changes at the organization level. There were generally not enough people who participated from the same organization to create a critical number to have a broad impact, and commitment from multiple stakeholders was needed to make bigger changes. Additionally, the training itself focussed more on internal and personal changes, and did not provide resources and tools on how to approach making changes at the organization level, or how to approach people who hold power at their organization, though some participants sought out guidance on these topics at their individual coaching sessions.



## WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE TRAINING

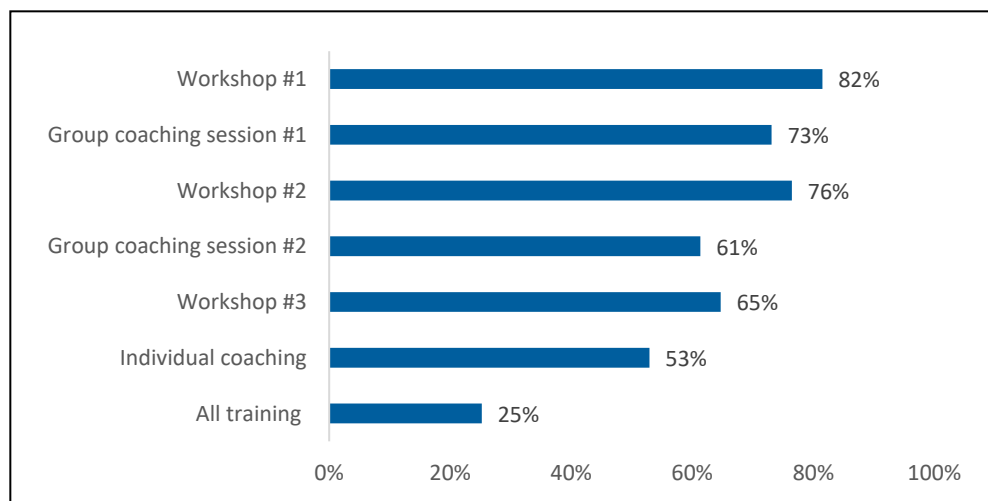
The profile of training participants is based on responses to questions on the baseline survey. Front-line staff make up the highest portion of the training participants at 45.5% (50). Front line supervisors and department managers form 23.6% (26) while 7.3% (8) belong to executive or leadership teams. The majority of participants are from settlement agencies (40.9%) and other non-profit agencies (33.6%). 81.8% (90) of participants are located in the Metro Vancouver and the rest are scattered across the rest of the province. 82.7% of participants have worked with newcomers for one or more years. Notably, 29.1% have worked with newcomers for 10 or more years.

Most of the training participants identified as women (88.0%). Other characteristics include: 46.4% immigrants, 37.3% identified as a member of a racialized community, 6.4% are people living with a disability, 5.5% identified with the LGBTQ2+ community, and 82.6% have university credentials.

## PARTICIPATION

Figure 3 shows the participation rates in the training activities. Participants were unable to attend all the workshops and coaching sessions offered. However, 25% did attend all training sessions. Participation was higher in the earlier events with 82% attending the first workshop. 53% of participants attended an individual coaching session. For the 72 participants who missed one or more activities, 27.8% indicated not being able to take time away from work responsibilities. Another 11.1% missed sessions due to personal reasons and 8.3% due to vacation.

**Figure 3** Percentage of participants attending each training activity

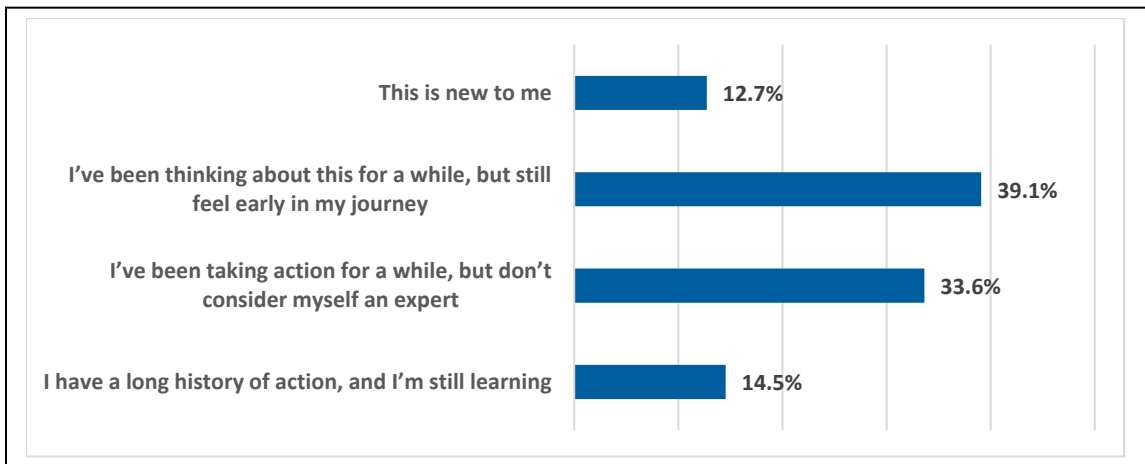


## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED

### UNDERSTANDING OF OPPRESSION AND ANTI-OPPRESSION PRINCIPLES BEFORE TRAINING

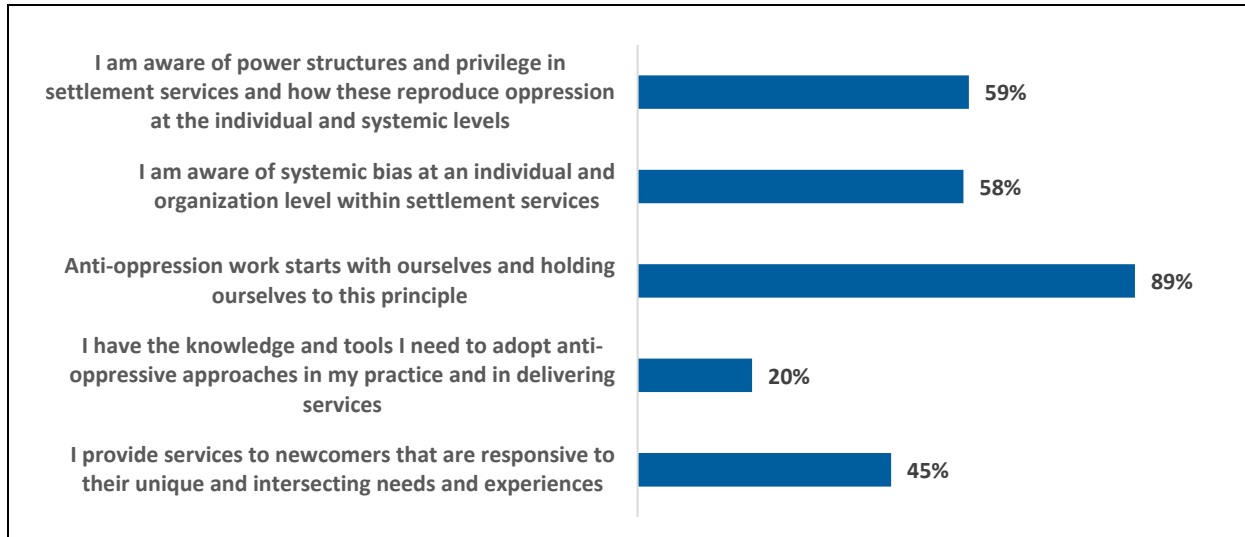
Before starting training, participants were asked where they were in their journey of learning and action on equity and anti-oppression. Figure 4 shows half of the participants said they were either still early on their journey on equity and anti-oppression (39.1%) or it was new to them (12.7%). Another 33.6% said they don't consider themselves as experts even though they have been taking action for a while. 14.5% indicated they have had a long history of action and still learning. In short, all participants are still learning regardless of where they are in the journey.

**Figure 4** Anti-oppression learning and action journey



**Awareness at baseline.** A good proportion of participants indicated a high level of awareness of anti-oppressive topics. However, the proportion was lower when asked about having the tools and skills to address selected topics. Figure 5 shows participants reported a high level of understanding that the work starts with them and holding themselves to this principle (89%). They also reported a good level of awareness of power structures and privileges (59%), and systemic bias at an individual and organizational level within the settlement sector (58%). Participants also indicated they provide services to newcomers that are responsive to their unique needs and experiences (45%). However, there was a lower level of agreement when asked if they have the knowledge and tools to adopt anti-oppressive approaches in their practice (20%).

**Figure 5** Awareness in and understanding of anti-oppressive approaches before training



**Ability to take anti-oppressive actions.** Using a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), participants were asked to rate themselves on a series of behaviour related to addressing anti-oppression (see Figure 6). Participants rated themselves highly on several dimensions that are client centred such as their abilities to listen to newcomers and meet clients' diverse needs and provide appropriate services and to reflect on their own privileges and how it may affect the ways they work with newcomers and offer services and support to newcomer clients that meet their diverse needs at where they are at. Participants rated their abilities lower in their ability to apply anti-oppression approaches at their organizations.

**Table 2 Rating of ability in anti-oppressive approaches before training**

| Statement   | Low   | Medium | High <sup>3</sup> |
|---|-------|--------|-------------------|
| Reflect on the privileges I have and how it may affect the ways I work with newcomer clients                                      | 6.4%  | 21.8%  | 71.8%             |
| Engage in conversations that involve race, privilege, and power dynamics  | 15.5% | 24.5%  | 60.0%             |
| Offer services and support to newcomer clients that meet their needs at where they are at and not treating all newcomers the same | 10.9% | 25.5%  | 63.6%             |
| Apply anti-oppression approaches in my practice   | 11.8% | 35.5%  | 52.7%             |
| Apply anti-oppression approaches at my organization   | 16.4% | 37.3%  | 46.4%             |
| Listen to newcomers and hear their intersecting needs and provide appropriate services  | 7.3%  | 16.4%  | 76.4%             |
| Be more than a bystander in situations that are racist and discriminatory   | 15.5% | 27.3%  | 57.3%             |

**Skill and comfort levels to address anti-oppressive behaviour.** Figure 7 shows participants’ ratings of their skill and comfort level at addressing oppressive comments, receiving feedback about oppressive behaviour and level of comfort with identifying and naming oppressive, discrimination, and racism before the training. More participants were comfortable receiving feedback about oppressive behaviour (48.2%) and identifying and naming oppression, discrimination, and racism (43.6%). However, a lower proportion indicated a high comfort (36.4%) and skill (29.1%) level with addressing oppressive comments. In fact, about one in five participants rated their skill and comfort levels as low with addressing oppressive comments.

<sup>3</sup> Note: Low (ratings of 1 and 2), Medium (rating of 3), and High (ratings of 4 and 5).

**Table 3 Rating of skill and comfort level in anti-oppressive approaches before training**

| Statement   | Low   | Medium | High <sup>4</sup> |
|---|-------|--------|-------------------|
| Skill level with addressing oppressive comments                             | 23.6% | 47.3%  | 29.1%             |
| Comfort level with addressing oppressive comments                           | 24.5% | 39.1%  | 36.4%             |
| Skill level with receiving feedback about oppressive behaviour              | 16.4% | 35.5%  | 48.2%             |
| Comfort level with identifying & naming oppression, discrimination & racism | 18.2% | 38.2%  | 43.6%             |

## REACTION OR EXPERIENCE WITH THE TRAINING

The anti-oppression capacity building training was designed to be an introduction to anti-oppressive principles. The majority of participants (84.1%) indicated that the training was appropriate for their level of understanding. However, 14.5% indicated the training was not advanced enough; given 14.5% indicated they have had a long history of action on their anti-oppression journey, this proportion can be expected. Furthermore, 90% of participants indicated the training was relevant to their work. 70%, lower but still a high proportion of participants found the training to have met their expectations.

98.4% of participants indicated they would recommend the training to their organization. Some of the main reasons for recommending are:

- **Informative, meaningful, and relevant training.** Many participants said the training was good and useful. It provided an opportunity that brought greater learnings, understanding and awareness to anti-oppressive topics and approaches to participants. One participant further elaborated that it is “*an initiation to understand how decolonization and its impact in present structures.*”

*“It is an eye-opener training that brings awareness and light amidst the chaotic oppressive system. It empowers you with tools that you can apply in your personal life and also in your work to support better clients who might have internalized oppression.”* Response on the post-training survey

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

- **Need for this type of training.** Several participants also mentioned the need for this type of training not only in their workplace but in their personal lives. Some comments from participants are:

*“I observed how this foundational knowledge in the local context still remains elusive to many. Such basic training should be (done regularly) but sadly isn't.”*

*“I think this training offers a unique perspective that we normally do not realize in our daily operations. It opens a new window on how we perceive someone or something.”*

*“I believe this training would be beneficial to all organizations in this sector.”*

- **Creating change.** A participant mentioned that the training was critical in bringing the sector together and creating change.

*“This training can help participants start/continue reflecting on our privileges and how we all contribute to the perpetuation of oppression. This training can raise awareness and raise commitment to action to contribute to change.”*

*“It is essential to provide and receive the training to dismantle oppressive practices and raise awareness.”*

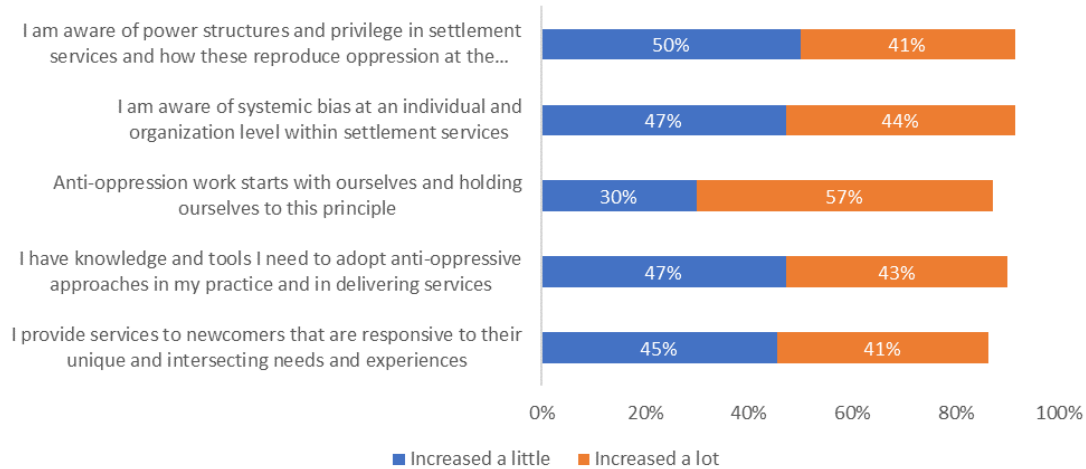
## OUTCOMES

After completing the training, many participants indicated gaining new knowledge (83%), new skills (74%) and tools (70%). 64% also said they have more confidence applying anti-oppressive approaches. Below, we provide more details about these enhanced capacities.

Figures 8, 9 and 10 relate to the learning outcomes achieved after attending the training.

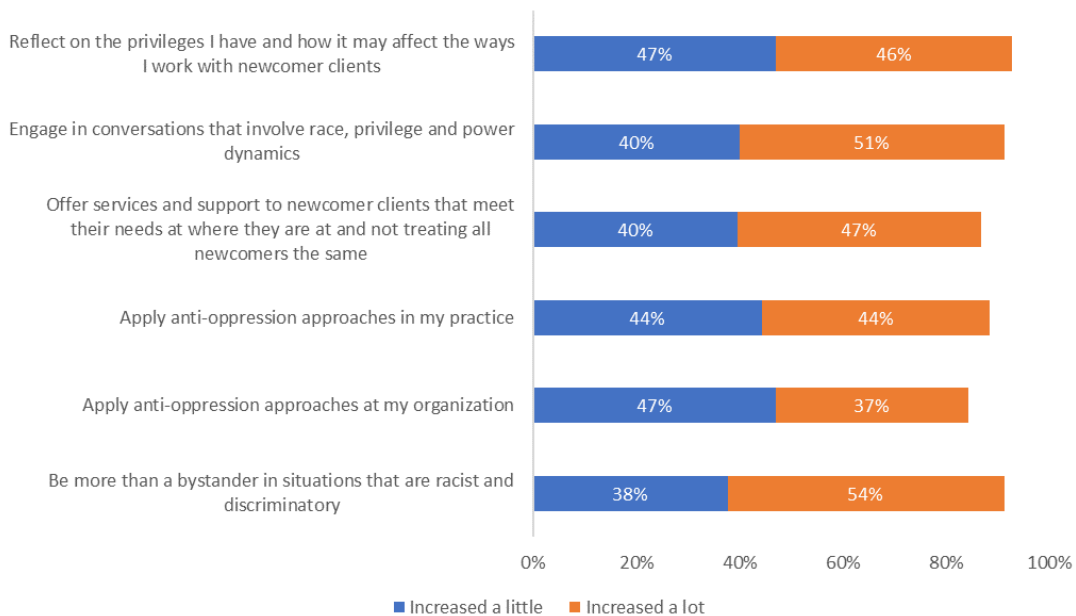
Participants were asked whether their **knowledge** related to the below concepts and competencies increased as a result of the training. For every indicator, over 80% of responses indicated that their knowledge increased a little or a lot; more specifically, we observed increases from 86% to 91%.

**Figure 6** Change in knowledge related to anti-oppression after the training



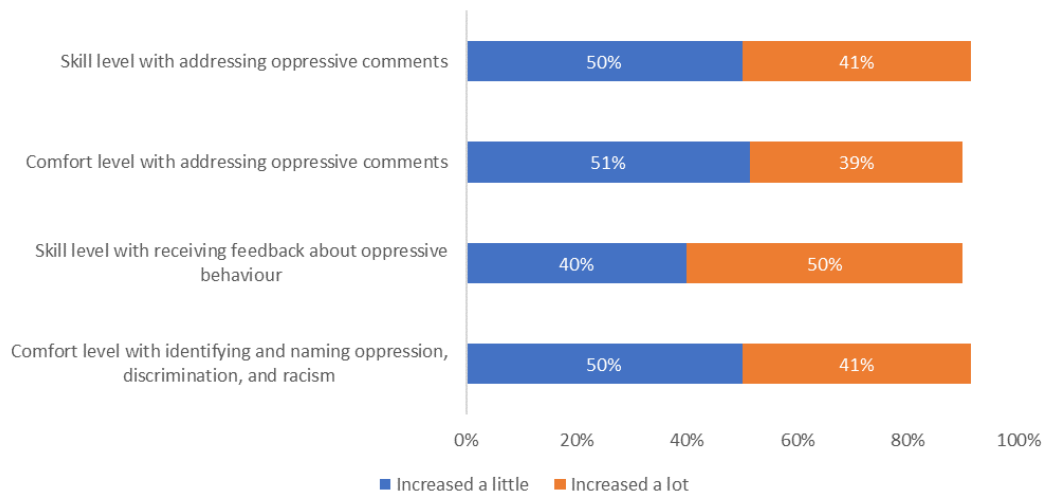
Participants were also asked if their **skills** related to anti-oppressive approaches had changed since completing the training. Again, over 80% of participants indicated that their skills had increased a little or a lot.

**Figure 7** Change in skills related to anti-oppressive approaches after the training



In terms of **comfort and skill level** with anti-oppressive approaches, over 90% of participants indicated that these also increased after the training. Moreover, a substantial proportion of participants reported the change in skill and comfort level increased a lot, ranging between 39% and 50%.

**Figure 8** Change in skill and comfort level in anti-oppressive approaches after the training



When asked for the most important thing learned from the training, several participants said, “*all of it.*” Many of the comments were aligned with the goals of the project, which are to raise awareness, and enhance knowledge and skills. Below are selected comments from participants about the most important thing they learned from the training.

*“One of the most important things I learned in a training is about trauma informed approach.”*

*“I am the tool. I can read and learn about oppression and racism, but I need to work on myself to be brave and commit to action when it's possible.”*

*“What kind of oppression exists, and how we unconsciously become oppressive to others in our daily operations.”*

*“The privilege that I have as a facilitator and how to be more aware of it to support the clients that I serve.”*



*“The impact of oppression. That micro aggression causes harm, even when not intended.”*

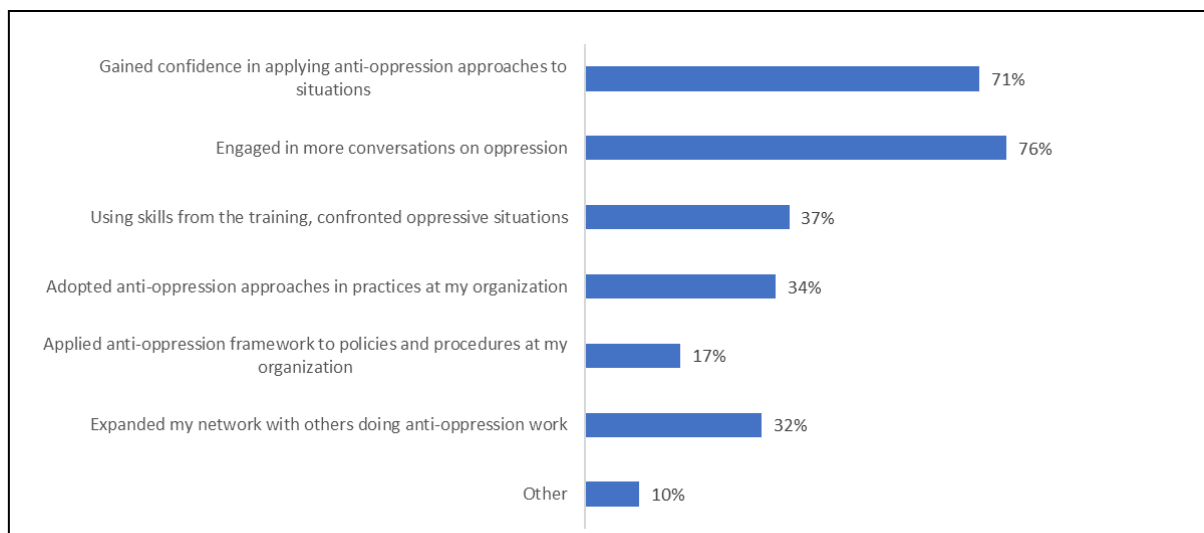
*“How social location impacts oppressive and racialized behavior.”*

*“How to address biases and my concerns in a positive way to create awareness.”*

*“Learning to respond to ableist/racist/sexist/transphobic (and other) comments in a way that does not come across as aggressive or attacking the person.”*

In the 3-month follow-up survey, participants were asked to indicate whether they had applied their learnings in the following ways. These applications were similar to what participants indicated in the post-training survey.

**Figure 9** Change in skill and comfort level in anti-oppressive approaches after the training



While most participants had gained confidence in applying anti-oppression approaches (71%) and engaging in more conversations on oppression (76%), they had a more difficult time with other applications, such as making changes to policies and procedures at their organizations (17%). Both in focus groups and in the follow-up surveys, we heard that some participants did not feel supported to make organizational-wide changes. These barriers are discussed in more detail in the “Challenges” section below.

## APPLICATION OF LEARNINGS

We asked participants on the post-training survey whether they have already applied their learning in their practice, and 86.0% said yes. Below are some ways they have applied their learnings.

**Communications.** Several participants indicated they practise their learnings in their communications, use of language, conversations with colleagues, and with newcomer clients. As a result, several noted these practises create safe spaces where people can be vulnerable, spark conversations by asking questions, raise awareness, and make better and inclusive connections.

*“I am able to recognize the behaviour more easily and also choose my words more carefully.”*

*“In communications and dealing with people, I have really thought about how we can make things more inclusive.”*

**Increased awareness.** Participants commonly mentioned being more aware or mindful of racist and oppressive situations. Some examples include:

*“I have realized my own unconscious biases, and how to deal with them. I'm also better at speaking up when things are said that aren't quite right, or may be slightly racist/stereotyping.”*

*“I am aware when I notice or see microaggressions ... and what I can do about it as a bystander. I also apply the learnings to myself to make sure that I am not being racist or oppressive when dealing with vulnerable people or customers. This allowed me to apply a new lens on the way I look at the world and navigate my work and the social setting. This helps me be more aware of how I can be accepting and inclusive of all people and not following the victim of social stereotypes.”*

**Tools from the training.** There were several mentions from participants on applying the tools they received from the training to recognize situations better, understand their biases, and how to respond in the oppressive situations.

*“...address inappropriate remarks; by implementing the tools learned into our practice.”*

*“I have had tools for addressing generalizations about race that I felt were inappropriate. I have learned to ask questions and to say how I feel.”*

**Client engagement.** A goal for building capacity of practitioners and organizations is to provide services that are more responsive to newcomer clients' diverse and intersecting needs. We see signs of this manifesting from the training based on comments from participants regarding how they applied their learning to better engage clients.

*"I applied the anti-oppression lens in my work when taking my privilege in my position and socioeconomic status into consideration when working with clients."*

*"In my communications with clients I constantly stop to think about what privilege I am experiencing and how I can mitigate it so that the client has a better experience."*

*"Supporting client in acknowledging experiences as racism."*

*"I remain curious to the youth and caregiver clients that I serve, listen to their needs and always provide space to allow them to express their thoughts opinions and questions."*

**Organizational applications.** We noted a few applications of learnings at the organizational level such as setting up training for other staff members and preparing materials to help other team members identify appropriate language in specific situations.

*"I was asked to provide a proposal of changes in our services, and I provided ideas to bring an anti-oppressive training to all the staff. Also, I used the knowledge from this training to justify the importance of creating a mentorship program to support our clients with internalized oppression to develop their leadership skills, and be more comfortable by doing networking and landing a successful job offer. ... Also, I pointed out the importance on changing the way that we provide our services with clients in the one-on-one session. Balance the relationship of power by relying in the needs of the client and wisdom instead of performing a role of the expert that knows everything. "*

**Incorporate into daily practices.** Many participants mentioned incorporating the learnings into their daily practice.

*"I apply it to my work re classroom instruction."*

*"I apply that to my day to day and in coaching my managers so that they would be comfortable coaching their staff."*

*“In my daily practices, I reflect on my bias, listen to people accessing the services, and advocate and guide as much as possible when facing barriers or oppression, especially the systems we must navigate when servicing newcomers.”*

*“Recognizing my own privileges, for example, not everyone has experience using technology/computers/email, so I am trying to avoid using too many technical terms when speaking to someone who may not be as experienced.”*

## CHALLENGES

**Attendance.** Over 50% of the participants who responded to the training exit survey missed at least one session. Over half of these participants indicated that it was because they could not take time away from work responsibilities. 21% listed personal reasons and 15% indicated it was due to taking vacation. The lack of time that some participants had to attend the training was also mentioned in TCLIP staff interviews as a barrier for participants to make changes at their organizations.

**Applying the learnings at organizations.** As mentioned earlier, while participants felt that while it was possible to apply their learnings to their own practice, or within their own teams, many experienced barriers in applying them to organizational policies and practices. Among the participants who responded to the 3-month follow-up survey, 42% of responses mentioned organizational barriers of some kind, including having to convince others at the organization of why this approach is important, fear of backlash, resistance to change, and lack of organizational or leadership support. These ideas were echoed in the participant focus groups and the TCLIP staff interviews as well. The training facilitator mentioned that even leaders felt just as disempowered as frontline staff. They felt that their jobs would be at risk if they spoke up.

*“There are competing processes that need to be implemented to create more infrastructure in non-profit organizations so applying learnings to recommending structural change is challenging. Implementing within my sphere of influence is easier.”*

*“When the organization we work for is not in alignment with the theory, [it] is challenging to use the anti-oppression learnings.”*

*“I’m very hesitant to even bring it up. And I see the signs of it. I see oppression in different levels. I also see racism.... I don’t see the willingness to change. I think everything is on [the] surface, just to check the boxes but not really taking action and making any changes.”*

*“People don’t want to change a system that works for them.”*

*“It doesn't help that the sector is overworked and underpaid... which does not really leave them with a lot of room to, you know, a lot of me time to reflect and think about how they can operationalize it.”*

## GBA PLUS

The analysis and evaluation were designed with a GBA Plus lens in order to examine relevant identities that may affect training participants' experience with the training and outcomes. The analysis focused on four identities: immigrant vs non-immigrants; members of a racialized community vs non-members; where participants are in their anti-oppression journey, and the level of participation in training activities.

At the baseline survey, we observed statistically significant differences in the level of awareness, abilities, skill and comfort levels related to anti-oppressive approaches across all four identities. For example, practitioners who identify as immigrants are less aware of power structure and privilege in settlement services and how these reproduce oppression at the individual and systemic levels in comparison to non-immigrant practitioners. But a higher proportion of immigrant practitioners agree that they provide services to newcomers that are responsive to their unique and intersectional needs and experiences compared to their counterparts. Similarly, practitioners who identified as an immigrant rated their ability to engage in conversations that involve race, privilege and power dynamics lower than non-immigrant practitioners, but rated their ability to listen to newcomers and hear their needs and provide appropriate services higher. These are statistically significant findings.

As shown in the discussions on immediate outcomes after taking the training, the training on average was positive for all participants and increased their awareness, knowledge, and skills. We further observed that the training was effective in removing or reducing the differences in these outcomes across the four identities. For example, training practitioners who are members of a racialized community reported on the post-training survey that their skill to reflect on the privileges they have and how it may affect the ways they work with newcomer clients increased a lot compared to practitioner who did not identify as members of a racialized community. This finding is statistically significant.

In terms of where training participants are in their anti-oppression journey, we found the proportion of participants who are newer in their journey reported lower agreement to the statement that they have increased their ability to understand the impact of racism and oppression on marginalized newcomers than participants who are further along on their journey. Also, a lower proportion of participants newer in their journey reported engaging in conversations that involve race, privilege and power dynamic compared to those further along in their journey.

The differences in outcomes in the identities being examined decreased from baseline to post-training, suggesting the training created a more “equal” understanding of anti-oppression issues among these different identities. A more detailed presentation and discussion of the GBA Plus findings is presented in Appendix A.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are recommendations from training participants, facilitator, and the project team to make anti-oppression training more relevant for organizations and practitioners in the settlement sector.

### TRAINING

#### Workshops

- Although there were efforts to customize the introductory anti-oppression training for the settlement sector, participants asked for more such as discussion about newcomers' experiences and ways to address the discrimination they experience when receiving settlement services.
- The workshops covered a lot of information. Participants suggested more discussions and interactions with participants and less of a lecture. They also asked for more direct or experiential experience or role playing involving discussing scenarios and what to do and how to respond in these situations. Some suggested breakout groups with more than one facilitator.
- Participants wanted time to talk about the tools shared in the workshops and how they can apply them. They felt they did not spend time on learning how to apply them.
- As mentioned, the participants received a lot of information in the workshops. Participants said they needed time to digest the information and to practice their new skills and build them before the next workshop or activity.
- Similar to the above suggestion, participants wanted access to the workshop materials in order to review, refresh, reflect and refer to at a later date.
- Participants also suggested separating training cohorts based on levels of knowledge and experience with anti-oppression.
- Training content could focus more on implementation related to organization-level change, such as more coaching in implementing an anti-oppression framework in policies and programs.

## Delivery format

- The project delivered the training workshops, group discussions and one-on-one coaching all online. Some participants suggested in-person training although the delivery team thought asynchronous training would help get more leaders to participate. A hybrid format could engage participants in some parts in-person, and in other parts fully online. There could also be simultaneous cohorts of asynchronous and real-time delivery.
- A sizeable proportion of participants was not able to attend all the training sessions due to work commitments and other reasons. Participants suggested recording the sessions and making them available for later viewing.

## Community of practice

- There was limited time for participants to dialogue and network with other participants who worked in similar services or programs. They wanted more of that. While the project did offer some additional events where conversations could take place, participants asked for an intentional space for them to learn and share about anti-oppression in addition to time to connect with other participants.

## Amplify impact

- The training was mostly made available to organizations and practitioners in Metro Vancouver. Participants suggested offering the training more widely outside Metro Vancouver in British Columbia and other provinces and territories.
- Make training mandatory for IRCC funded recipients and across all levels of staff at the organization. In addition, participants said within the organization, the training should be mandatory and taken with co-workers so everyone can learn together and practice it with more awareness.
- The project team and the CAOC facilitator suggested that targeting the training to entire organizations instead of individual participants could be an effective way to create more systems change.
- Incentives associated with completing the training may help encourage maximum participation in the training. One suggestion that emerged from an attendee at the celebration event is to grant accreditation for the training, which can be tied to the organization. However, this still does not guarantee any changes to programs or policies. As mentioned previously, the idea that IRCC makes this type of training mandatory for their funding recipients would help build this capacity in the sector more widely.



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

*“...instead of changing the flow of the river, we can move rocks, and with time, the flow will change by itself. I see this anti-oppression training as a way to learn how to move rocks, so with time, if more people are willing to relocate small rocks, the flow of the river will be transformed.”*

The project successfully implemented anti-oppression training to 133 practitioners in 45 organizations mostly in Metro Vancouver. Before taking the training, half of the participants indicated that they were still early in their journey of learning and action on equity and anti-oppression.

The training was designed to be an introduction to anti-oppressive principles and the majority of participants (84.1%) indicated that the training was appropriate for their level of understanding. Moreover, 90% of participants indicated the training was relevant to their work, and 70% found the training to have met their expectations.

The training activities were effective. After completing the training, many participants indicated gaining new knowledge (83%), new skills (74%) and tools (70%). More specifically, after the training, participants were more able to identify oppressive situations and use their tools to address it and to be more than a bystander. In addition, 64% said they have more confidence in applying anti-oppressive approaches. More importantly, the majority of participants reported they have already applied their learnings in their daily practice (86.0) in areas such communications, client engagement and use of training tools. However, while participants felt that it was possible to apply their learnings to their own practice, or within their own teams, many experienced barriers in applying them to organizational policies and practices.

The GBA Plus analysis observed differences in the level of awareness, abilities, skill and comfort levels related to anti-oppressive approaches in selected identities both before the training and after the training. While the training on average was positive for all training participants and increased their awareness, knowledge, and skills. The findings showed the training was effective in removing or reducing the differences in awareness, abilities, skill and comfort levels in the identities reported. Training needs to consider participants' intersecting identities and where they are at in their journey.

The evaluation results show changes or actions at the organizational level were more challenging for various reasons including convincing organizations or people who may be more resistant to change. The project recruited and targeted individuals for the training and not organizations. There is consensus from all project partners as well as participants that an organization-wide approach to the training may work better to bring about changes to address systemic racism and oppression in the settlement sector, and deserve further research and testing.

## APPENDIX A: GBA PLUS FINDINGS

Below are statistically significant findings from the GBA Plus analysis. Results are denoted by \*\*\* (1 percent level), \*\* (5 percent level), and \* (10 percent level).

### Immigrants

#### *Baseline survey*

- Practitioners who identify as immigrants are less aware of power structure and privilege in settlement services and how these reproduce oppression at the individual and systemic levels (\*) in comparison to non-immigrant practitioners. But a statistically higher proportion of immigrant practitioners agree that they provide services to newcomers that are responsive to their unique and intersection needs and experiences compared to their counterparts (\*\*).
- Similarly, practitioners who identified as an immigrant rated their ability to engage in conversations that involve race, privilege and power dynamics lower than non-immigrant practitioners, but rated their ability to listen to newcomers and hear their needs and provide appropriate services higher. These are statistically significant findings (\*\*).

#### *Post-training survey*

- A lower proportion of participants who identified as immigrants:
  - agreed that they will make plans and discuss strategies to look after their team, community, and personal mental health and well being (\*\*), and
  - Reported their skill levels with receiving feedback about oppressive behaviour increased a lot (\*\*).

### Members of racialized communities

#### *Baseline*

- Members of a racialized community are more aware than non-members of:
  - power structures and privileges in settlement services and how these reproduce oppression at the individual and systemic level (\*),

- systemic bias at an individual and organization level within settlement services (\*\*), and
- anti-oppression work starts with themselves and holding themselves to this principle (\*).
- Members of a racialized community rate their ability to engage in conversations that involve race, privilege and power dynamics and apply anti-oppression approaches to their practice higher (\*\*) in comparison to non-members.
- Members of a racialized community rate their skill and comfort levels higher in comparison to non-members with:
  - addressing oppressive comments (\*),
  - comfort level with addressing oppressive comments (\*),
  - skill level with receiving feedback about oppressive behaviour (\*\*), and
  - comfort level with identifying and naming oppression, discrimination and racism (\*\*).

### *Post-training survey*

- A higher proportion of members of a racialized community reported their:
  - knowledge related to the statement “I am aware of power structures and privilege in settlement services and how these reproduce oppression at the individual and systemic levels” increased a lot (\*\*) than those who do not identify as racialized;
  - skill to reflect on the privileges they have and how it may affect the ways they work with newcomer clients increase a lot (\*) compared to participants who do not identify as racialized.

### *Where in Journey*

#### *Baseline*

- Not unexpected, participants newer to the anti-oppression approaches rated their ability, skill/comfort level in the approaches lower than those who are more advanced on their anti-oppression journey.

### Post-training survey

- Participants newer on their anti-oppression journey reported:
  - less agreement in the statement that they have increased their ability to understand the impact of racism and oppression on marginalized newcomers (\*), and they will make plans to discuss strategies to look after their team, community, and personal mental health and wellbeing (\*).
- A higher proportion of participants newer on their anti-oppression journey in comparison to those who are more advanced on the journey reported their knowledge related to the statement “anti-oppression work starts with ourselves and holding ourselves to this principle” (\*) but lower proportions in comparison to those who are more advanced reported the following increased a lot:
  - skills related to “engaging in conversation that involve race, privilege and power dynamics (\*\*\*)
  - “offering services and support to newcomer clients that meet their needs at where they are at and not treating all newcomers the same” (\*\*), and
  - “being more than a bystander in situations that are racist and discriminatory” (\*\*).
- A lower proportion of participants early on their anti-oppression journey reported their skill and comfort levels with addressing oppressive comments (\*\*), receiving feedback about oppressive behaviour (\*\*), and identifying and naming oppression, discrimination and racism (\*\*) increased a lot compared to those who are more advanced in their journey.

### Training intensity

The sample size for the number of participants categorized in the lower participation group is not adequate to examine variations by the level of participation in the training activities. Thus, results for this comparison is less robust. We do however want to note the data suggest that 1) participants who attended more training activities may have reported that their knowledge about anti-oppression work starts with themselves and holding themselves to this principle increased a lot compared to participants who had lower participation rates and 2) more likely to apply their learnings.

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