

# Racial Caucusing for Change in the Workplace

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## Introduction

Foundry Central Office (FCO) is the backbone organization of the Foundry network of Integrated Youth Service centres located in British Columbia, Canada. Youth across our network and provincial advisory committees rallied for anti-racism change during the re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in summer 2020. An anti-racism working group formed to support change within FCO and a lead organization in community operationalizing Foundry services. The group discussed racial caucusing (also known as employee resource groups) in the workplace environment. The idea was socialized and used during the anti-racism assessment and drove the need for a training and education process that would use racial caucusing in the design. In racial caucusing, the work of Indigenous, Black, and Persons of Colour (IBPOC) is different than white caucuses. An IBPOC caucus focuses on creating a brave space to talk about and address experiences of racism, unpack internalized oppression and build relationships to support difficult conversations about race in a primarily white-dominated space. A white caucus gathers to create an accountable space to work through barriers that prevent white people from working together towards anti-racism. It provides an opportunity for white-identifying colleagues to unpack power, privilege, and discuss emotions and learning without causing harm to IBPOC colleagues. The learning structure consisted of three online modules, followed by race-based discussions.

## Objectives

To design a learning process that engages staff and leaders across the backbone organization to have conversations about race in caucused groups at work; To evaluate the effectiveness of using racial caucusing practices in a work environment.

## Approach/Methods

The design of content and process was made alongside an external consultant and a smaller working group. Anonymous surveys were used throughout the process, together with feedback gathered during the race-based discussions. This information was used to inform next steps in the implementation of further training and caucusing.

## Results/Policy Implications

The process resulted in several key learnings. Often training modules are used to raise awareness and understanding of unconscious bias and anti-racism. Counter to their intent, attending one-off trainings on unconscious bias or racism tend to lead to increased implicit bias behaviours and actions. This method of ongoing discussions in race-based caucuses in the workplace is an effort to shift social, systemic and institutional power. Fear of divisiveness are often cited as a reason for not going this route; however, we contend that intervening and dedicating time and resources to spaces where groups are separated and meaningfully brought together to discuss race is necessary for change.

## Conclusion

In an effort to align our values as a provincial network, we are committed to supporting behavioural changes in staff and leadership. We firmly believe that, as leaders in the health and social services system for youth, our knowledge, reflexivity and actions need to evolve to be more anti-racist, and we are willing to support discomfort with safety in the workplace to achieve our goals.

