



Guidelines for Decolonized and Racially Equitable Meetings

Racism manifests in a multitude of ways, including at structural, institutional and interpersonal levels. It can be obvious and overt; implicit and subtle. All forms of racism have the ability to cause psychological, environmental, generational and physical harm to Indigenous folk, Black folk and People of Colour (IBPOC). White-dominated culture often silences the voices and experiences of IBPOC communities, minimizes their contributions and privileges white voices. These meeting guidelines are one small part of the [AOM's commitment](#) to deconstructing systems of oppression and amplifying IBPOC voices.

Keep focused on the common goal

The AOM's goal is "Advancing the clinical and professional practice of Indigenous/ Aboriginal and Registered Midwives in Ontario," especially those who are, and will be, directly impacted by racism and colonialism.

Examine racially biased systems and processes

Dominant systems and values, established over time in a [white-dominated culture](#), may be seemingly neutral but aren't. The fish swimming with the current doesn't realize its advantage over the fish fighting the current.

Critically reflect on your own biases

Acculturation in the dominant society includes learned racial biases. "Race neutrality" or "colour blindness" perpetuates systems of racism. Being anti-racist means actively identifying and *deconstructing* our own privilege, biases and systems of oppression, and focusing on the *impacts* of our actions, not just intentions.

Identify and shift power dynamics

Power and privilege exist formally (e.g. partnership; AOM Board), informally (e.g. culturally) and systemically (e.g. race), affecting who speaks and who doesn't; whose voices hold weight and whose are ignored; what people vocalize and what they fear expressing. Recognize power dynamics and be aware of how you use your privilege. Don't play the victim (i.e. [white tears](#)), wield your power (e.g. [weaponizing whiteness](#)) or disengage.

Center marginalized voices

The perspectives of the empowered and majority are often centered. Prioritize and acknowledge the voices and lived experience of the most marginalized midwives (e.g. IBPOC, 2SLGBTQ and differently abled midwives), without demanding proof or rationalization. [Read more](#) about bell hooks' margin-to-center theory.

Create spaces for multiple truths and be kind and authentic

Speak your truth and seek understanding of truths that differ from yours. Be respectful and explicit with your language about indigeneity, race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, immigration and religion.

Look for learning

Listen for learnings and be open to new perspectives. Acknowledge mistakes and hold yourself and others accountable. Actionable equity is a learning process that is continuous and requires deep humility.

Act

Harm is often done when well-meaning white people attempt to deconstruct racism without following the leadership of IBPOC people. Yet, IBPOC people should not bear the burden of deconstructing the systems of their oppression. Empower racialized and Indigenous midwives, follow their lead and speak up to identify racism when they are unable to, being mindful of the space and power that you are taking.

Adapted from Equity Matters' Color Brave Space: <https://fakequity.com/2017/05/26/color-brave-space-how-to-run-a-better-equity-focused-meeting/>