



Guidelines for Racially Equitable and Culturally Informed Meetings

Racism exists at structural, institutional and interpersonal levels, and can be both overt and subtle. All forms of racism can cause psychological, environmental, generational and physical harm to Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC). In meetings, white-dominant culture often silences the voices and experiences of IBPOC communities, minimizes IBPOC contributions and privileges white perspectives.

The AOM works to advance the clinical and professional practice of Indigenous and Registered Midwives. The **2022-2025 Strategic Plan** outlines two key commitments (1) to support the self-determination of Indigenous nations, and (2) to achieve racial justice and human rights by dismantling systems that uphold white supremacy, inequity and power imbalances in midwifery.

These meeting guidelines are offered to achieve this vision and honour these commitments. The guidelines are for all AOM meetings, including the Annual Member Meeting (AMM). The guidelines are a concrete way that all midwives can support equity over equality by ensuring that IBPOC voices are amplified when decisions are being made.

Examine racially biased systems and processes

Dominant systems and values, shaped by **white-dominated culture**, may seem neutral, but often are not. It's like a fish swimming with the current, unaware of the advantage it has over a fish swimming against it. Achieving racial justice requires shifting power dynamics, which can feel uncomfortable or threatening to those who have historically enjoyed privilege. An equitable system benefits everyone by creating space for diverse voices and perspectives, leading to more inclusive, creative, and sustainable outcomes.

Critically reflect on your own biases

Conforming to societal norms can lead to internalized racial biases. "**Race neutrality**" or "**colour blindness**" perpetuates racism by ignoring systemic disadvantages. Being anti-racist means actively identifying and deconstructing our own privilege and biases, and focusing on the impact of our actions, not just our intentions.

In meetings such as the AMM, reflect on how your life experiences, privileges and implicit biases may influence your decision-making. Consider how First Nations, Inuit and Metis Peoples and equity-deserving communities might be impacted, even if a proposed idea seems to benefit the "majority".

Identify and shift power dynamics

Power and privilege influence who gets to speak, whose voices are valued, and what people feel safe to express. Recognize these power dynamics, and if your social identity affords you privilege, be mindful of how you utilize it. Avoid victimhood (i.e., **white tears**), misuse of power (e.g. **weaponizing whiteness**) or disengagement. Instead, actively listen to others, be open to diverse perspectives, challenge harmful statements and assumptions, and use your privilege or influence to promote equity and justice.

Center equity deserving voices

The perspectives of those in positions of power and the majority are often prioritized. It's important to center and acknowledge the lived experiences of midwives and communities who are underrepresented or have been systemically disadvantaged. **Read more about bell hooks' margin-to-center theory.** This can include knowing when to speak up or hold space for others, asking thoughtful questions that invite diverse perspectives, or amplifying the contributions of IBPOC individuals.

Addressing internalized oppression

Internalized oppression can occur within equity-deserving communities when individuals unconsciously adopt the beliefs, values and stereotypes of the dominant culture. This can result in self-doubt, marginalization of other non-dominant groups, **lateral violence** and a scarcity mindset that drives competition for limited recognition and resources. We must create space for each other's voices, recognizing that all forms of oppression are interconnected, and that collective solidarity is essential for dismantling them.

Create a respectful learning environment

Always start with humility and respect. Be open to learning and recognize that mistakes will happen in the process of dismantling systems of oppression. Acknowledging our mistakes and holding ourselves and others accountable is key to achieving racial justice. Starting with respect, learning, and accountability are all important ways we can show up for each other as midwives and contribute to more racially equitable and culturally informed meetings.

Racial justice beyond meetings

Power dynamics in meetings don't exist in isolation, they reflect the broader systems we live within and the future we're working to build. These guidelines are a starting point, but real, lasting change requires action that extends far beyond the meeting room. Racial justice in midwifery is not just about how we show up in meetings, it's about how we show up in the profession, in our communities, and with one another. To contribute to meaningful, long-term change, consider how you can actively champion racial justice in all areas of your work. This can include mentorship, community building, advocacy, accountability and continuous learning. Building a racially just profession is ongoing work. It's personal, collective, and transformative. It asks us to not only challenge what's happening inside the room, but to change the conditions outside of it.