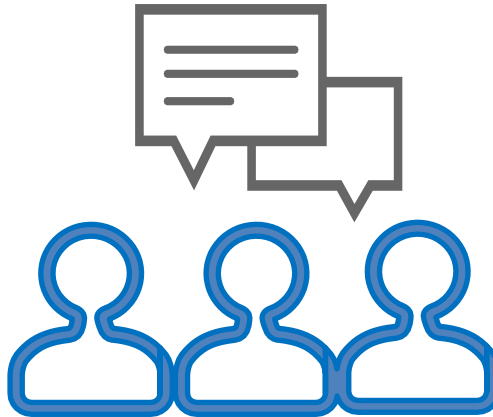
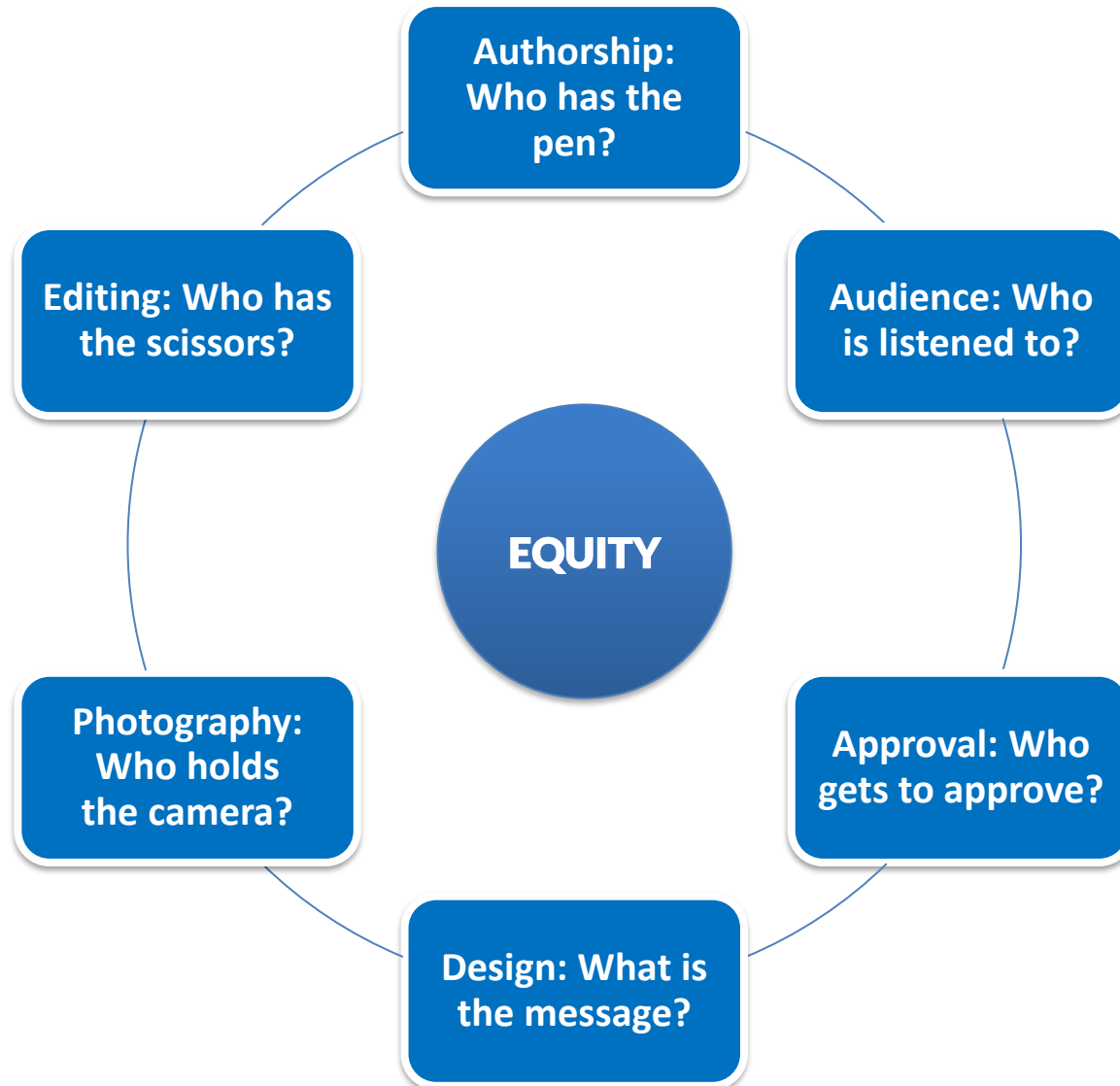


DEVELOPING

An Equity Lens

Strategies for Inclusive
Communications





Source: Shared Voices: Mennonite Mission Network guidelines for anti-racism and anti-sexism communication.
https://www.franconiaconference.org/media-uploads/pdf/SharedVoices10-239_Download.pdf

Stages of Equity Literacy

1

Unconscious Incompetence

At this stage, you are not aware of any biases in yourself or your communications. You may not be aware of the negative messages you are communicating, the lack of representation in the images, or that people from diverse communities are excluded from developing the narrative.

If people identify issues, you may attribute it to them being overly sensitive or defend the decisions made because of your timelines or other factors. You do not see the need to change the way you've always worked.

This stage may sound like:

"This is interesting information, but it doesn't apply to me. I don't have any biases."

"The problem is that we don't have any diversity here. If we did, we would include them."

2

Conscious Incompetence

At this stage, you are aware that biases exist and are trying to recognize it in yourself and the organization. You may make a commitment to change, but may be challenged to identify biases and how it may affect your work. You may also be more comfortable acknowledging the impact of bias on some groups over others. You may be aware of your biases, but resist the need for change as you don't think there is a problem when you act on your biases.

This stage may sound like:

"Wow, I didn't even think about my biases. But I don't think they affect my work."

3

Conscious Competence

At this stage, you have moved from understanding to action. You are focused on the issue and are able to recognize bias in yourself and in the organization. You also begin to raise the issue of bias when you see it. Although you can recognize bias, you may not be able to explain it to others or teach them bias literacy.

This stage may sound like:

“Can we discuss this story a bit more? I don’t have much experience with the issue and I want to be sure I’m representing the issue accurately.”

“This story is biased and makes assumptions about that teacher based on her race. Are we able to take another look at this and perhaps do a rewrite?”

4

Unconscious Competence

At this stage, you have become more comfortable acting to minimize the impact of your own and others’ biases. You also begin to see bias in organizational policies and practices.

Your ability to recognize bias becomes second nature, and you feel comfortable explaining it and teaching others about this issue. You are more comfortable making public statements when you recognize bias and sharing your knowledge with others.

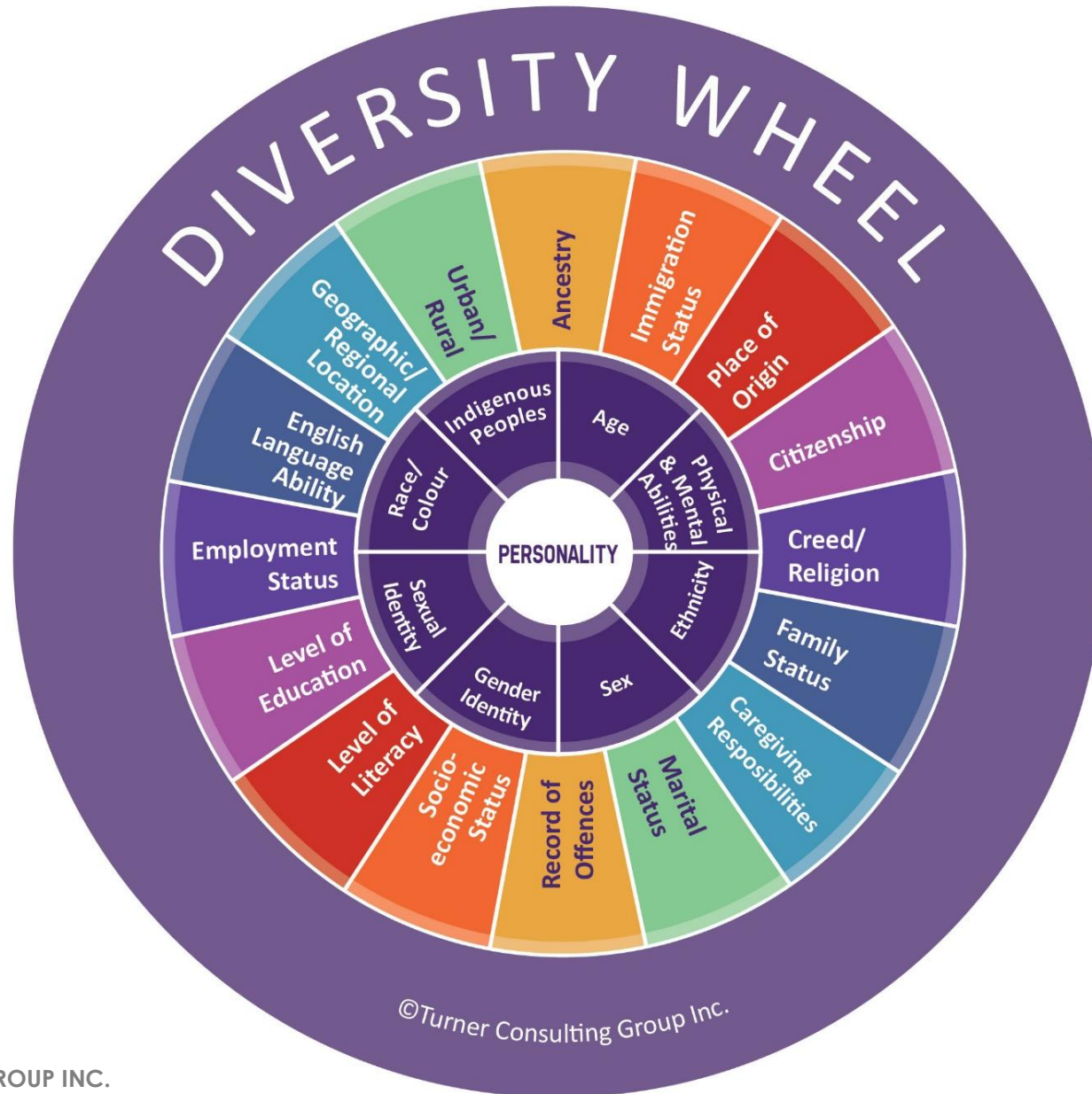
5

Reflective Competence

At this stage you are fully bias literate.

You understand that most biases come from our culture and that biases are a “social virus” rather than an individual issue. You actively try to unearth your biases and seek out opportunities to learn through reading and increase your comfort level with people who are different from you. You are also committed to challenging the biases of co-workers and to identifying and removing biases that are embedded within the organization’s culture, policies, and practices.

Consider the Full Range of Diversity & Intersecting Identities



Tips for Inclusive Communications

Develop Your Knowledge and Self-Awareness

- ☐ Be aware of any privilege that you bring to the conversation and its potential impact on participants.
- ☐ Be sensitive to group dynamics in which marginalized voices are often silenced or sidelined, and actively counter those dynamics.
- ☐ Educate yourself: Members of the dominant culture have a responsibility to educate themselves about those who are not part of that culture and on the societal dynamics (personal, interpersonal, and institutional) of those inequalities and hierarchies.
- ☐ Respect all opinions and voices, even if you don't agree.

Developing Content

- ☐ Consider stories that reflect and appeal to the diversity of your membership.
- ☐ Consider stories that serve both as “windows” and “mirrors”, i.e., stories that allow people to see others and allow people to see themselves.
- ☐ Are your stories increasing your members' understanding of the various forms of oppression?
- ☐ Who is able to participate in the development process from inception?
- ☐ Do you hire freelancers and/or work with vendors from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities?

Visual Elements

- ☐ How do you approach people to set up a photo or video shoot? Was everyone given clear communication for how to prepare? Are there appropriate hair, make-up, and clothing resources? Are there cultural considerations or requests?
- ☐ Who is being placed in the foreground versus the background? At the centre versus to the side? What message does that send?
- ☐ When taking photos or lighting videos, have you considered lighting and make-up for subjects across the spectrum of skin tones?
- ☐ Remember intersecting identities, e.g., not all persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and women are White.
- ☐ Use images that depict people of various backgrounds in various roles.
- ☐ Who is the active agent in your photos? Who is depicted in positions of authority and leadership? Is the portrayal accurate?
- ☐ Use images of people from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities in communications that have nothing to do with their identity or oppression.
- ☐ Avoid Black-White or other binary depictions of racial groups. Recognize that different people and communities encounter differing types of stereotypes and discrimination based on diverse and intersectional identities.
- ☐ Are you using stock images from a company that pays its photographers fairly and has a diverse range of photographers?
- ☐ Are you using stock images that show people from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities? For example, libertipix.com or indigenousimages.ca.

Constructing the Narrative

- ☐ Do not use a White saviorism narrative.
- ☐ Avoid words that reinforce stereotypes.
- ☐ Use language that elevates the experiences of marginalized people.
- ☐ Counter harmful media narratives rather than reinforce them.

- ☐ Communicate messages that centre and celebrate diversity.
- ☐ Address topics of oppression and interrogate systemic oppression.
- ☐ Write the story in the active voice.
- ☐ Consider who is included as “experts”. Are women, racialized people, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ people able to speak about issues unrelated to their identity or about issues of oppression?

Counter Common Narratives

Some themes consistently emerge in conversations about oppression, particularly from those who don't want to talk about unequal opportunity or the existence of oppression. It's important to examine these conversations and become familiar with these themes. The purpose of doing this is not to argue against each theme point by point, but rather to understand what stories are happening in people's heads when they are reading the information.

Common themes that you should actively try to disrupt include the following:

Indigenous peoples

- Most Indigenous people live on reserve, so the rest of us don't have to deal with these issues.
- If Indigenous people were qualified, they would be hired.
- Speaking about anti-Indigenous racism means that other forms of racism aren't important.
- Indigenous people just need to get over it.
- Qualified Indigenous candidates are hard to find.

Racialized people

- Racism is “largely” over or dying out over time.
- Racialized people are obsessed with race.
- Discussing discrimination is itself racist and divisive.
- Talking about racism is “playing the race card.”
- Speaking about anti-Black racism means that other forms of racism aren't important.
- Focusing on racism is a crutch for those who lack merit or drive.

- If we can address poverty, racial inequity will take care of itself.
- Racism will always be with us, so it's a waste of time to talk about it.
- Qualified Black and racialized candidates are hard to find.
- If they are so critical of Canada, why don't they just go back to where they came from?

Women

- Men are at a disadvantage in the field of education.
- Because the majority of teachers are women, sexism is no longer an issue in education.
- If women were more confident, they would advance quicker.
- Men naturally make better leaders than women.
- Women aren't as interested in advancement as their male counterparts.

Persons with disabilities

- They aren't able to handle a full day's work.
- Some people pretend they have a disability to get out of doing work.
- People with disabilities are heroes just for getting out of bed in the morning.
- There are only a limited number of jobs that people with disabilities can do — and teaching is not one of them.
- People with disabilities are not as productive as those who don't have a disability.

2SLGBTQ+

- In today's workplaces, all people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ are able to be open about their identity.
- Being 2SLGBTQ+ is a lifestyle choice.
- People who are 2SLGBTQ+ are attracted to certain types of jobs and teach certain subjects.
- 2SLGBTQ+ people can be identified by certain mannerisms, clothing, or physical characteristics.
- I don't know anyone who is 2SLGBTQ+.
- 2SLGBTQ+ people are predominantly young, White, and non-religious.

Terminology and Language

- ☐ Use Canadian terminology, not American such as “people of colour” and “BIPOC”.
- ☐ Use proper nouns. Capitalize the proper names of racial groups, religions, nationalities, and peoples.
- ☐ Allow individuals to identify their preferred terminology.
- ☐ Use people-first language; for example, persons with disabilities, Black people, people experiencing poverty, persons experiencing homelessness.
- ☐ Use up-to-date terminology.
- ☐ Do not use age- or disability-related terminology to describe a situation metaphorically, especially if the phrasing is meant as an insult or used flippantly.
- ☐ Do not use language that patronizes, sentimentalizes, distorts, or ignores people based on their age, disability, or other identity.
- ☐ Most times there is no need to refer to a person’s age, disability, or other identity. Only refer to their identity if it is relevant to the story. But when the need arises, choose acceptable terminology or the term preferred by the individual.
- ☐ Include titles, credentials, and positions held only when they are germane to the story.
- ☐ Avoid value-laden terminology or terminology that blames the oppressed for their oppression; for example, at-risk, culture of poverty, the needy, disadvantaged.
- ☐ There are more than two genders and more than two sexes. It is always okay to note this.
- ☐ “They” is a good alternative if you aren’t sure of the person’s pronoun.
- ☐ If a gender-neutral term is available and does not change the meaning, consider using it.
- ☐ Generally, it is not necessary to specify the gender of a person in a particular role, as occupations are not gender defined. Avoid terms that gender occupations. Use appropriate alternatives are cleaner, firefighter, police officer, and chair.

Sources

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A Communications Toolkit

<https://www.opportunityagenda.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/2019.05.06%20Toolkit%20Without%20Comic%20Book.pdf>

Diversity Style Guide, Society of Professional Journalists

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