

# Intersectionality Toolkit



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# Foreword



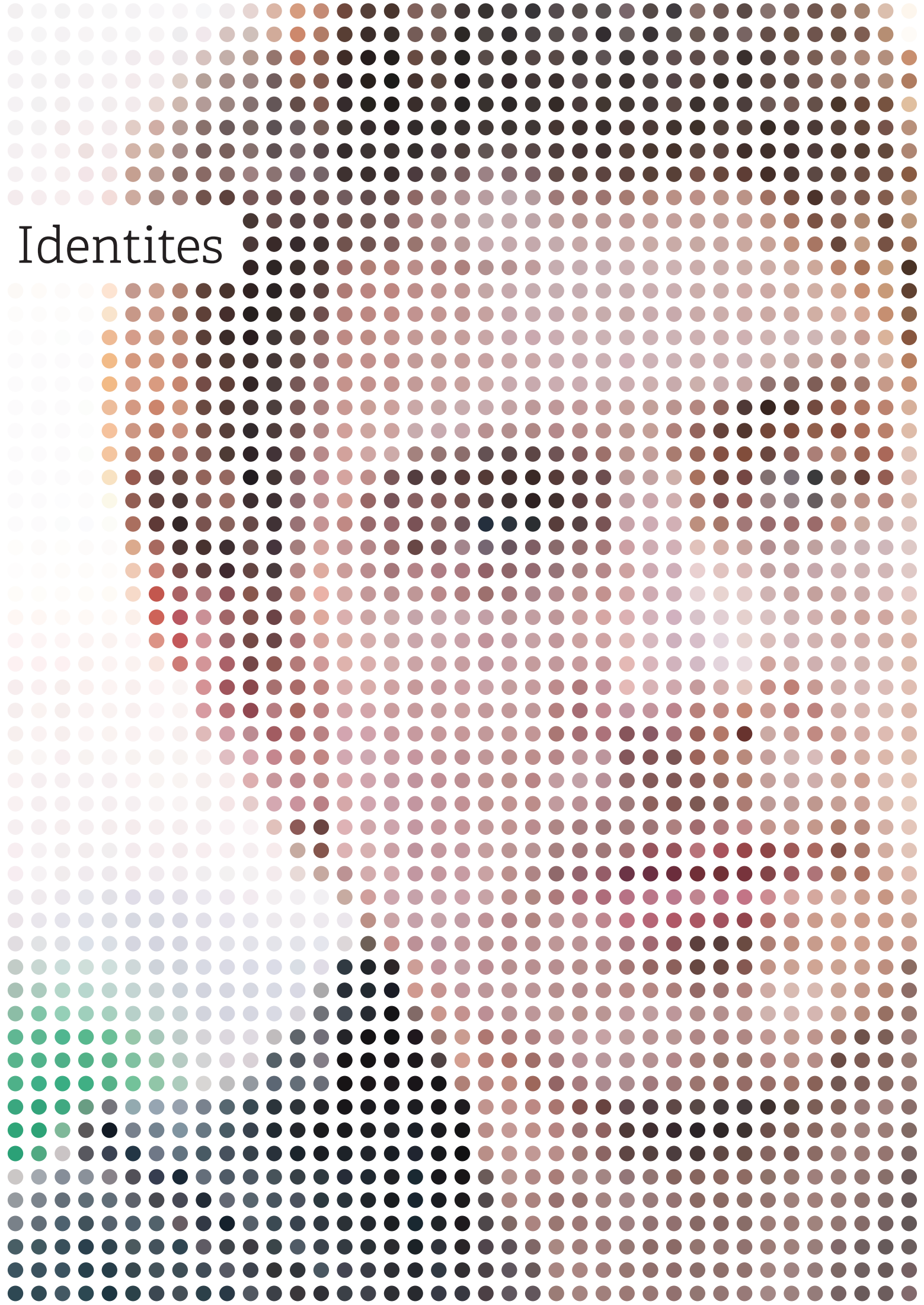
IGLYO adopted intersectionality as a key focus area in 2013 and held a series of roundtables and a conference on the topic the following year. Through this work, it became apparent that intersectionality is not simply a theme to be studied for a limited time, but should be seen as a fundamental approach, embedded throughout the work of organisations. This toolkit would not have been possible without valued inputs from partner organisations, conference participants and volunteers.

It is a practical guide for both individual activists and organisations to learn more about Intersectionality and its principles, and to provide a selection of activities to explore practice around inclusiveness.

Intersectionality is the study of intersections between different forms of oppression or discrimination. As humans we all carry a series of identities that make our individual experiences of oppression unique. We can be lesbians who have minority ethnic backgrounds. We can be gay and living in poverty. We can be transgender with a (dis)ability. We can be bisexual and Muslim. The intersections are endless and cannot be considered independently from one another, since they constantly interact with each other and often reinforce the oppression each brings. Social, cultural and biological categories such as gender, sex, race, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. interact on multiple and simultaneous levels and it is this interaction that contributes to social inequality, injustice and discrimination. The constant interaction of intersections, however, is complex and does not always end up with a predictable result. In some cases one intersection might cancel out another, while in other cases, one leads to discrimination while another results in privilege. This complexity is important to take into consideration when working with intersectionality and we need to recognise that we – in all our diversity – should enjoy respect, and celebrate all the intersections of our identity.

An intersectional approach recognises that these multiple intersections exist in endless combinations, and that they can sometimes lead to privilege and sometimes to discrimination. We must continually question where the power lies in different societies, organisations and groups to understand why some individuals are treated better than others, find it easier to be successful, or are more readily included. Only by doing this can we start to see who is excluded or discriminated against. Intersectionality, therefore, encourages solidarity, highlighting that all struggles for freedom from oppression are interlinked and that they can all benefit by interacting with each other. By working together we can all begin to strengthen the fight against oppression in general.

Identites



Focusing on one area or another (gender, race and ethnic identity, (dis)ability, socio-economic status, etc) allows us to examine how specific identities affect people in different ways. This focus also helps us to understand which elements contribute most to discrimination on one level. While doing so, however, we must keep in mind that the intersections of identities are indeed endless and should be considered in terms of each other.

### 1. Gender

As individuals, and/or organisations, we can reflect on and analyse the way gender is displayed in our work and become aware of gender-power structures, an awareness of which can lead to more intersectional work being carried out by our movements. Problems which arise when analysing gender relations include the oppression of women within different equalities movements, the dominance of cis, white, male leadership in organisations and groups, the unbalanced division of tasks, the space taken at meetings, and also the focus which might be taken by an organisation or another. Does this happen in your organisation as well? How could you challenge this status quo?

More than that, gender is not restricted to the binary norm of male and female, gender is a spectrum of identities, and should include trans, genderqueer, and other gender identities and gender expressions. People who visibly break gender binary norms are more prone to being discriminated against as this singles them out and might highlight their differences. Breaking gender norms is not just about breaking gender expression norms, but also gender roles. One damaging result of only recognizing strict gender binary norms is the unequal recognition of qualities in men and women.

It is however important to point out that the gender issue is not just one that should be tackled by civil society organisations which deal with issues of gender, but also by feminist, women and LGBTQ organisations in their daily work. Although LGBTQ organisations can be in a better position than other equality organisations to carry out work on gender issues, the approach taken with these issues may not always be an intersectional one. Indeed feminist and women's organisations should aim to be inclusive, in not catering solely to cis-women. In fact organisations which promote gender equality (including LGBTQ, feminist & other organisations) should attempt to use approaches which do not enforce gender binary norms.

### 2. Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status (SES) is a societal construct which indicates an individual or group's social standing or class in respect to others in society. SES is commonly measured by taking into consideration an individual or group's education, income and occupation. There are three major categories referred to when allocating a SES; these include: High SES, Middle SES and Low SES.

While analysing SES it is important to understand how it affects an individual's opportunities and abilities to access rights and how it relates to an individual's perceived position and access to privilege in society. By actively reflecting on SES and the effects of this area on an organisation's work, organisations and individuals will be able to better understand the underlying power structures which are influenced by SES factors.

Often within activist movements there is a white, cis-male, middle class and highly educated hierarchy, and that should be challenged by making space and letting other people's voices heard and taken into consideration. Not only these voices will bring a valuable input that you wouldn't have access to otherwise, but you will make one step further in recognising the diversity of the community. As civil society organisations and activists we should strive to include those voices who are most marginalised in society, through direct implication into the organisation's work. Internal self reflections of the work we do within organisations and groups, and the people involved with the work carried out is an important place to start: ask yourself *"Why are most of the people present at our events and meetings white, middle class, educated people?"*, *"Who am I failing to include in the conversation?"* and *"What steps could I do to make sure more voices are at the table?"*.

Overcoming such issues is not easy, as the system has deep roots in the preservation of current societal structures and the separation of different people within society. Organisations have a duty of responsibility that requires outreach and strong inclusion policies to diversify and include those individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds to be included and participate in the organisation's work. Only through greater inclusion and diversification of organisations can social mobility within activism begin to grow.

## Identities *continued*

### 3. (Dis)abilities

In this toolkit we use the widely accepted term 'people with (dis)abilities' while acknowledging that there are various other terms that are accepted and used in different countries and/or contexts, such as disabled people, users and survivors of psychiatry, people with mental health problems, etc. (Dis)abilities should be understood within the framework of the so-called social model (see glossary), which is also the ruling paradigm of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with (dis)abilities.

It is important to recognise the diversity of (dis)abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities when understanding how to build inclusive organisations and combat discrimination. A (disability) can be either physical, psycho-social, intellectual and/or sensory, or some combination of these. These (dis)abilities can affect the whole or part of the body. Some are born with (dis)abilities while others become people with a (dis)ability because of incidents later in life, for instance through an accident or as the result of a disease. Each person with a (dis)ability has their own identities and support needs, neither of which should be assumed.

The more a person's (dis)ability diverges from conceptions of what is considered normal in society, the greater the sanctions and discrimination. Mental (dis)abilities remain one of the most taboo forms of (dis)abilities. Our (dis)abilities affect our lives on different levels and where in one occasion we are limited by our (dis)ability, in others we are completely unaffected.

The gender identity and sexual orientation of a person with a (dis)ability is often made invisible. Assumptions that people with (dis)abilities don't have a sexuality, or are heterosexual and cisgender are common. This means that sexual and gender identities of people with (dis)abilities are not being respected, and may lead to people suppressing fundamental parts of their identities. Dependence on carers/helpers and the level of knowledge, attitudes and values regarding sexual orientation and gender identity among them may strengthen these barriers.

Often people with (dis)abilities are underrepresented within different rights movements. A simple, but often revealing question to ask is how many people with a (dis)ability are represented in our organisation? How many are coming to events? How many are volunteering? How many are represented on the board, in committees and in positions of power? How many are included in decision making?

### 4. Racial and ethnic identities

In order to be able to challenge institutional, social and political forms of racial and ethnic forms of oppression there needs to be an understanding of the basis of such discrimination and its manifestations both generally and specifically. Very often, racial and ethnic minorities are denied access to certain spaces and services, are subject to stereotyping and un-realistic representation in the media, are not included in decision making, are made invisible, or are bullied. Depending on the local/regional history of where you live, racism can manifest in various ways; take time together with people from your community, including different racial and ethnic identities, to reflect about the ways in which institutional, social and political forms of racism manifest in the general society and in your organisation.

The limitations that people from racial and ethnically diverse backgrounds face in general society should not be reproduced within other marginalised communities especially within the LGBTQ community given the shared histories of oppression. Even within other marginalised communities, there is often an invisibility or silencing of different racial and ethnic identities.



In order to be able to challenge this behaviour and to create sustained change within the LGBTQ community, there needs to be elements of support of internal diversity both in terms of self-identifying autonomous groups for different racial and ethnic identities, events and initiatives, which will act as safe-spaces, as well as critical self-reflections to power and privilege as a practice in your organisation. This should only be seen as a supplement, and not as a replacement for having inclusive organisations and we should always strive for making our organisations inclusive for people regardless of racial and ethnic identities. Another vital aspect is understanding our collective history and how much people from different racial and ethnic identities have contributed to different communities around the world especially in terms of the struggle for recognition, visibility, equality and ultimately, liberation.

As organisations and groups we have to move beyond tokenism and identify ways to restructure the entire system - in this instance, organisations ensuring structures are in place to allow the full participation of marginalised people. Having a group member with a different racial and ethnic identity from the majority doesn't mean you have achieved inclusiveness; the organisation should make sure that more voices are being heard and taken into consideration as a practice not as an exception.

## 5. Other Identities

The four sections above have introduced some of the main identities and intersections that organisations should consider, but there are a whole range of others which should also be kept in mind. The list below includes some of these, but again shouldn't be seen as exhaustive:

- Age
- Religion and belief
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Educational attainment
- Body size
- Drug/alcohol addiction
- Marital status
- Parental status
- Political beliefs

While targeted work on any of the above identities can be useful to increase the diversity or inclusion of different minorities, taking an intersectional approach means working holistically with each individual and understanding that they are made up of multiple identities including elements of all of the above and more.

Although this concept can be overwhelming, it doesn't mean your organisation suddenly has to become an expert in every element of identities or groups. What it does mean is your organisation should always be open to learning, proactively make links with other equalities organisations and groups to share knowledge and take the time to get to know the people with whom you work and how their intersections affect their experiences in life. Put most simply, it's about remembering that every one of us is different and, as a result, needs different things.



Adopting an  
intersectional approach

This section provides information on key aspects that must be taken into consideration in order to make your organisation intersectional. The following section provides some practical tools to assist you in doing so.

### **Outreach and consultation with key groups and their organisations**

Working intersectionally means that you take into account the opinions of people with multiple identities and learn more about race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, socioeconomic status etc. from the people who are facing the oppression associated with these identities. Be proactive in initiating the conversation with individuals and human rights organisations that work on these issues to learn more about their work, lives and opinions in a non-intrusive but open way. Ask them to evaluate your organisation's work and be open to their suggestions on how you can improve to be inclusive of all identities. This way you can help each other and make sure that people feel welcome in your organisations without having to choose one identity over another e.g. a muslim lesbian woman should be considered as a full individual and not be put in a position where they have to downplay aspects of their identity.

### **Inclusion policy in the organisation**

Policies of your organisation should protect and support minority identities while also enhancing their full participation within the organisation.

To be effective, any policy targeting specific groups should be developed and implemented with the full and direct participation of members of the groups affected by the policy in question, a concept summarised effectively by the slogan 'Nothing about us without us'. Often the policies regarding underrepresented groups, including policies on (dis)ability as well as sexuality and gender, are developed and implemented without representation of those who belong to the marginalised societal groups themselves.

Take a moment to read your internal policies while thinking about the following:

- Is my organisation actively welcoming everybody?
- Are we creating safe spaces for everybody to take part?

The organisation should have a code of conduct, for example, which should detail some of the steps to be taken to avoid situations where some individuals might feel unwelcome, while outlining procedures to be followed when one or more individual(s) do not respect or follow the code. Prioritising accessibility in internal organisational policies will contribute to making your work more accessible to people with different types of (dis)abilities (physical, learning, medical, speech and language, etc.).

### **Representative membership**

The membership of the organisation should reflect who the organisation is aiming to work for. Organisations should aim to include a broad range of identities in order to be truly representative and avoid speaking on behalf of others who are not included. Due to the diversity of individual identities, needs and opinions may differ: having members with multiple backgrounds ensures that your organisation is aware of the multitude of realities that people face.

### **Representative leadership**

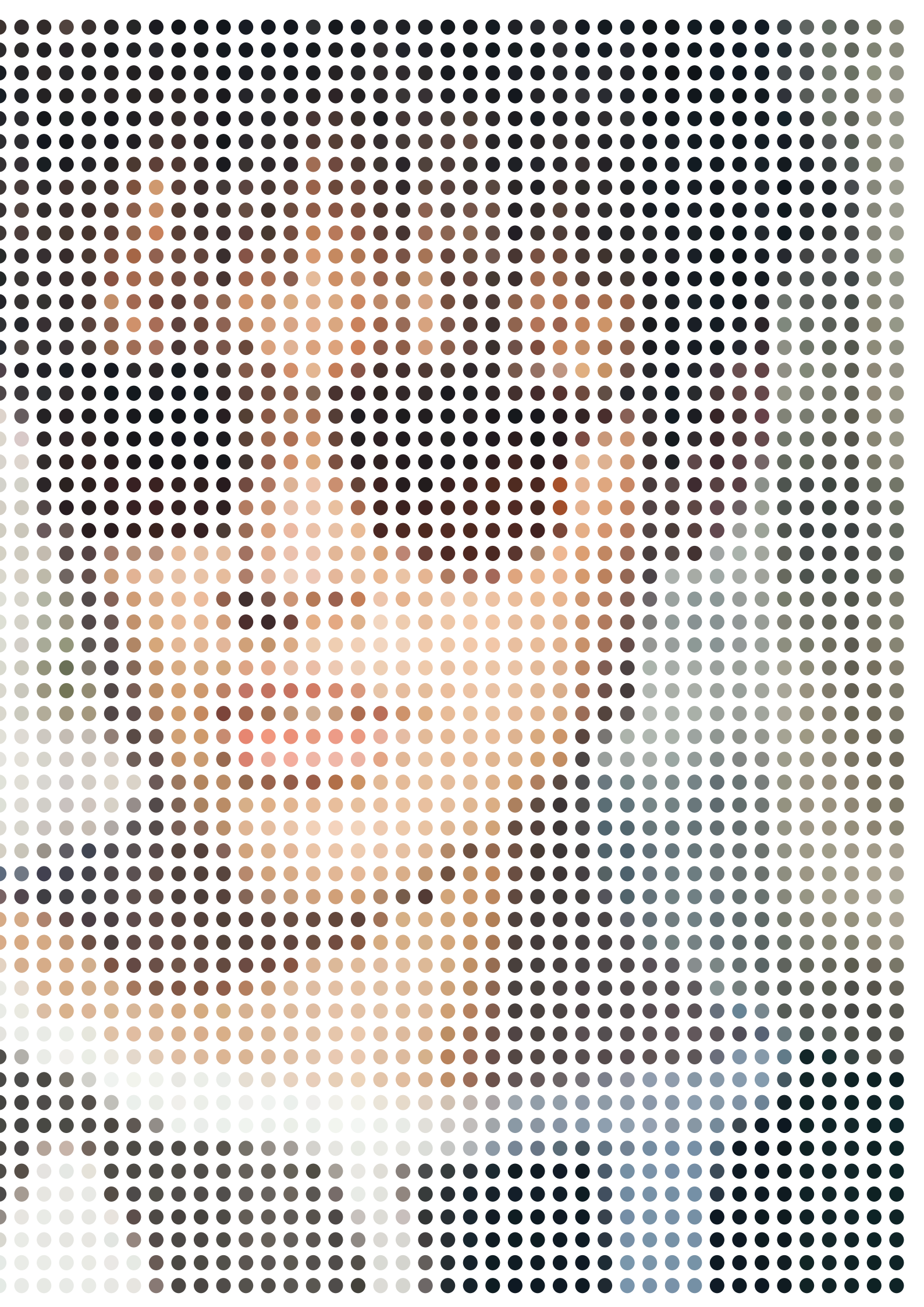
The leadership should reflect the diversity of the members and of the community. Those who are often left out of leadership positions (women, ethnic and racial minorities, people of colour, people with (dis)abilities, gender variant people etc.) should be encouraged and supported to take up positions. In this way, you will send a clear message of awareness and commitment to making the organisation more intersectional.

More than that, visible role models who are, for example, LGBTQ people with (dis)abilities and who are active in (dis)ability/LGBTQ organisations could empower others to join the movements.

*Continued on page 12*



We need to recognise  
that we – in all our diversity –  
should enjoy respect, and celebrate  
all the intersections of our identity



## Adopting an intersectional approach *continued*

### Visibility

Reflect upon whose voices are heard and valued and whose are silenced and not taken into account within your organisation. People with diverse backgrounds should be given space to speak and bring new perspectives to the organisation's work. Listening to people's lived experiences makes your activism more inclusive and representative. Give a thought to the following: Who has the most power in the organisation, who appears on TV or on your promotional materials? Is it just certain types of identities, bodies and appearance or there is a wide range of representations?

### Practicality

Reflect on the following questions:

- Who has been left out in your work until now?
- What identities have not been taken into account in your projects, events and campaigns?
- How could you include them?

The events and campaigns your organisation does send a message about who you welcome in your work, whose voices matter and what topics are important to you. Are your events accessible to all types of identities, bodies, backgrounds? There is a need to ensure offices, venues, and resources are accessible: this may mean providing easy-to-read versions of publications, physical adjustments to spaces, flexible hours, quiet spaces, or the usage of Braille. Additionally, organisations should also consult each person about their particular needs in a given situation and provide so-called 'reasonable accommodations' to meet these. Outreach should always be proactive and visible.

Make sure that your code of conduct extends to events and campaigns, and that it is put into practice, adapted or changed if needed etc. Stay strong on your position of having a safe space that is inclusive of everybody, and don't tolerate the propagation of oppressive behavior.

### Solidarity and statements

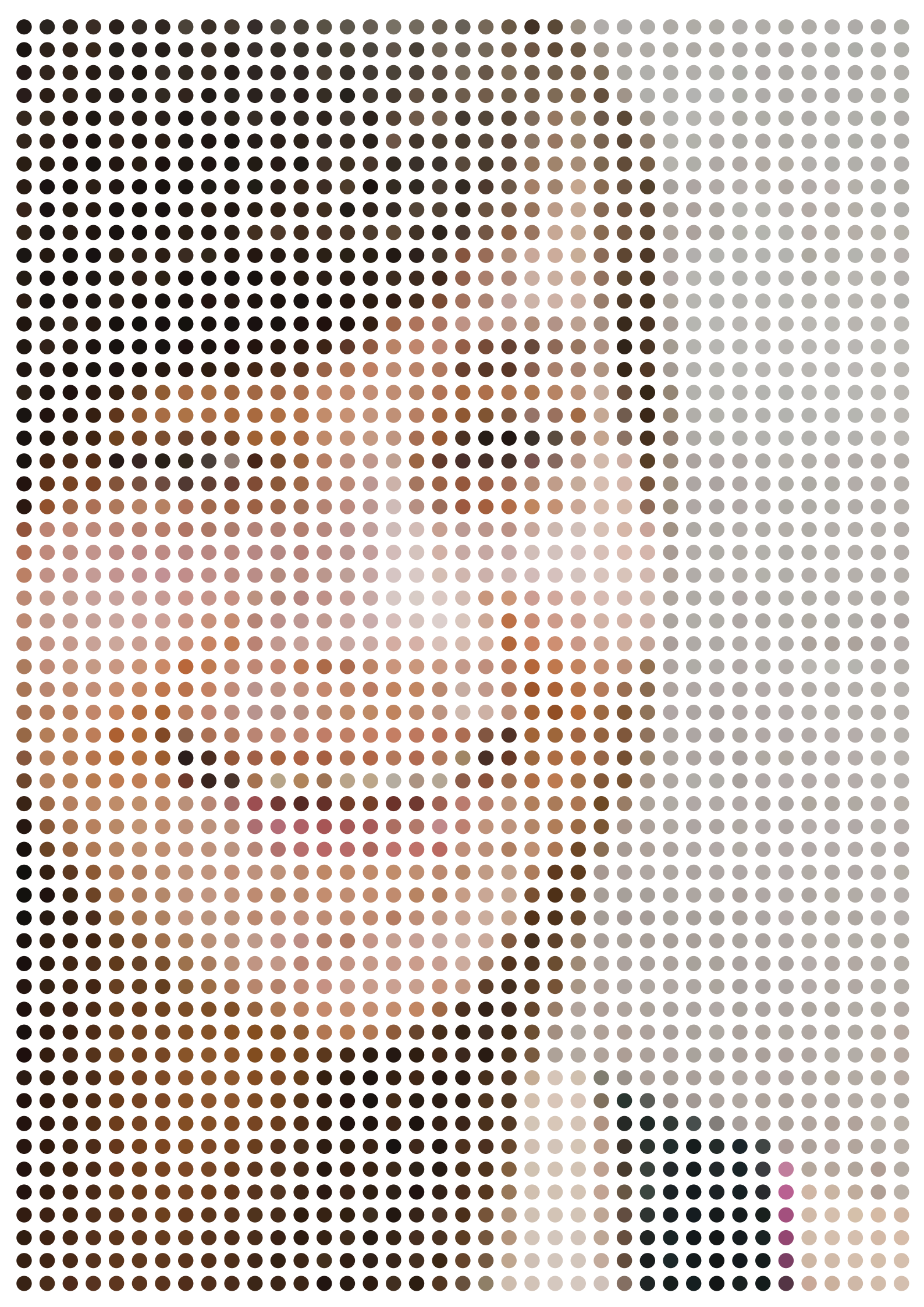
Working intersectionally means working in solidarity with other human rights organisations in order to show that each human rights violation affects all individuals and society at large. Showing solidarity not only helps different struggles but also sends a positive message towards your own community. Make sure that you are using the group's own voice and words when making a statement of solidarity - it is their opinion that has to be transmitted. They know best what can help them in this situation and all you can do, as an ally and intersectional activist is to listen and act as an amplifier for those voices.

### Advisory board

Whether it is about internal policies and procedures or events and communication, you will need support in adapting your work to be more inclusive. It is difficult to be aware of every aspect and issue of all identities, thus having an advisory board for intersectionality/inclusion can assist in understand what works well, what areas need development, and what is missing. The advisory board members can be from within your own organisation but should also include representatives from other organisations.

### Training

All volunteers, board members and staff should be on the same page regarding the need and value of working intersectionally. Training can be a great tool for learning and development, especially if it is provided by experts in the areas you feel your organisation lacks understanding and/or information. Investigate possible options, e.g. whether other human rights organisations are able to provide training on the topics you'd like to focus on. In exchange you can offer training on the issues your organisation focuses on, if they are interested.



Tools





This section provides some tools for evaluating the status quo in your organisation, and for thinking about the steps to take in order to ensure an intersectional approach.

### 1. Exercise: Who belongs?

*(Adapted from Break the Norm (pp.34-35), RFSL Ungdom)*

This is a workshop that should be performed with individuals in your organisation. On a sheet of A4 participants should draw a triangle, representing their organisation. The top part of the triangle represents those who are in positions of power and influence, those who are seen and heard most frequently and who others look up to and listen to, as well as those who are most well represented in the organisation's policies, materials, documents, etc.

Hand out an organisational scavenger hunt checklist (see below) to each participant. Ask participants to individually place the people listed in relation to where they would be found in the organisation. Those who would not be found in the organisation at all are to be left outside the triangle. Others should be placed hierarchically on the triangle.

When using this exercise, feel free to add more or different characteristics to the list, depending upon your context.

Debrief:

- Which people belong to your organisation and which do not? Which people does the organisation cater most to (relevant documents, language, resources, information, events, etc.), and which least to, or not at all?
- What is the internal hierarchy like?
- How can this be changed?

Note: The aim is not to identify ways of including people as a sign of tokenism, or even aiming to become all-inclusive overnight, but rather to examine what norms exist in our own organisations, which individuals have most/easiest access to positions of power, how that impacts on the organisation and its work, and how we can begin to challenge the status quo.

Organisational scavenger hunt checklist:

- A bisexual cisgender woman
- A white cisgender male
- A disabled person whose (dis)ability is not visible
- An individual who is privately educated
- A transgender woman
- An immigrant cisgender male
- A working class person
- A visibly disabled person
- An immigrant cisgender female
- A cisgender female university graduate
- A transgender man
- Someone who is not a university student or graduate and/or does not plan to go to university
- A person who could pass for male or female
- A religious asexual woman

## 2. Intersectionality checklist

Individually think about your organisation and group and rate it based on the following questions:  
(1 strongly disagree - 2 disagree - 3 somewhat agree - 4 agree - 5 strongly agree)

Question	1	2	3	4	5
There is a range of genders who attend my group/organisation					
No single gender makes up the majority of attendees					
There is a range of genders represented on the board/committee					
Genders are regularly discussed/considered as part of our work					
We have links with gender organisations					
There is a range of racial and ethnic identities who attend my group/organisation					
No single racial and ethnic identity makes up the majority of attendees/members					
There is a range of racial and ethnic identities represented on the board/committee					
Racial and ethnic identities are regularly discussed/considered as part of our work					
We have links with racial and ethnic identity organisations					
There is a range of people with (dis)abilities who attend my group/organisation					
No one (dis)ability makes up the majority of attendees					
There is a range of (dis)abilities represented on the board/committee					
(Dis)abilities are regularly discussed/considered as part of our work					
We have links with (dis)ability organisations					
There are a range of people from different socioeconomic statuses who attend my group/organisation					
No single socio-economic status makes up the majority of attendees					
There are a range of people from different socioeconomic statuses represented on the board/committee					
Socioeconomic statuses are regularly discussed/considered as part of our work					
We have links with socio-economic statuses organisations					

Are there any other identities or groups that are missing from your organisation? List them below:

Think about which identity/group/intersection is least present/represented in your organisation/group and briefly outline why this could be the case and what initial steps you could make to be more inclusive.

### 3. Action planning

Whether you are new to intersectionality, or your organisation already takes an intersectional approach in its work, action planning is always important. Action planning is about identifying a specific goal or goals you would like to achieve, and mapping out the steps needed to achieve them. The template provided below can be used to guide you through this process. Simply answer each of the questions in turn to create your initial improvement plan. This can be done individually, but is often better as a group exercise, involving staff, volunteers and participants of the group or organisation.

<b>CONTEXT</b> What does/can my organisation (and/or I) do to ensure an intersectional approach in our work?	<b>OBJECTIVE</b> What specific objective(s) do I want to achieve?	<b>KEY STEPS</b> What key steps do I need to take in order to reach my objective(s)?	<b>IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES</b> What are some of the key challenges I may face in reaching my objective(s)?	<b>ADDRESSING CHALLENGES</b> What can I do to mitigate or address the key challenge(s)?	<b>EVALUATING OUTCOMES</b> How can I evaluate progress to see if I achieved my objective? What worked well/could be improved? What are the next steps?

#### 4. Guided fantasy: A walk in the park

*(adapted from Dundalk Outcomers Facilitator's Pack)*

Estimated time: 30 minutes

Facilitator Requirements

- Quiet space without interruptions
- May play slow soft music if helps settle room
- Keep the pace of the exercise slow and calm

Purpose: Sometimes, even if we don't realise, we live by some norms that have shaped us throughout our lives. With this exercise you can begin an honest conversation about them, while recognising that we all have our norms and stereotypes. At the end of the exercise you will be able to bring your participants at the point of realising their own and thinking of ways of changing the status quo.

##### Procedure for Guided Fantasy (20 mins)

Ask group to sit in circle, and slowly talk through the following guided fantasy.

Close your eyes. Take a minute to imagine yourself in a public park. Just for now it is empty of people. It's a warm summer's day, the trees are heavy with leaves and the sun breaks through to make you feel warm. There is a slight breeze; you can feel it on your face. As you look forward you can see a path winding its way far into the distance. Around the path there are flowers, grassy patches of cut grass and large leafy trees. The only sound is of birds singing.

You hear the birds and smell the freshly cut grass; you feel the heat of the sun and are refreshed by the slight breeze. You look in front of you and decide to follow the path.

You begin to walk and you move along the path and hear human voices in the distance. You look first to your right and then to your left, you notice a young child kicking a football. The child throws the ball into the air and catches it as it falls. You notice the ball fall hard into the child's hands. Two people are playing with the child – you smile and wave towards them noticing the smiles on their faces.

You continue to walk around some large trees and pass two people sitting on a bench. They are laughing loudly – you try to hear what they are saying. You move again along the path and see a couple walking towards you holding hands. They walk past you as you look at them.

As you walk on a number of men are sitting on a bench by the path, talking and laughing – you look at them one by one.

As you walk on you are nearing the gate of the park, you walk through the gateway and in front of you, you see this building (make relevant to environment). You walk into the building and then into this room. You sit on the chair and feel it under you. You begin to slowly open your eyes and come back into the group when you are ready.

##### Key Questions for Discussion (40 mins)

Use the following questions to stimulate discussion in the group on the experience of the Walk in the Park.

- When you saw the child with the ball, was the child female
- The two people you saw with the child, did you imagine them to be the child's parents?
- The two people sitting on the bench: what did they look like? Were they white and able-bodied?
- The couple holding hands that were walking towards you; were they an old or retired couple, were they able-bodied, were they non-white, were they two women or two men?
- The group of men on the bench, were they young or old, were they able-bodied, and were they white?
- Did anyone in your park wear clothing or jewellery which made you think they were from a different culture?

##### Was everyone in your park:

- White?
- Able Bodied?
- Young or middle-aged?
- Were there couples of the same sex
- Were there any retired or old people in your park?
- Were there different ethnic groups in your park?

##### Final debriefing questions:

- Why do you think that you saw the park in that way?
- How do you think that the way we see the world influences our work?

# Glossary

## Accessibility

The state of an environment being open and available regardless of (dis)abilities. For example, equipment for people with hearing impairments in a conference room or availability of Braille translations for people with visual impairments.

## Cis (gender)

Someone whose self-identity matches with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex; not trans.

## (Dis)abilities

(Dis)abilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus, (dis)ability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which they live.

## Gender identity

Gender identity is a person's individual sense and experience of their own gender. This could be male, female or non-binary.

## Intersectionality

The understanding that inequalities and oppression cut across different identity categories, and that social identities have multiple dimensions; for instance, sexual orientation and gender identity and constituted differently in relation to a number of other social subjectivities, such as age, ethnicity, region or country of origin.

## Multiple discrimination

Discrimination based on two or more identities/intersections, such as religion or belief, race, (dis)ability, age, gender and gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

## Power/privilege

A societal structure that provides people with more or less influence and conditions for influencing society and their own lives. The opportunities and conditions a person has are related to financial standing, sex and ethnicity, for example.

## Racial and ethnic identity

Racial and ethnic identity refers to the idea that one is a member of a particular cultural, national, or racial group that may share some of the following elements: culture, religion, race, language, or place of origin. Two people can share the same race but have different ethnicities.

## Reasonable accommodations

A reasonable accommodation is an adjustment made in a system to accommodate or make fair the same system for an individual based on a proven need.

## Safe space

Safe space is a term for an area or forum where either a marginalised group are not supposed to face standard mainstream stereotypes and marginalisation, or in which a shared political or social viewpoint is required to participate in the space.

## Sex

Sex refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex. There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.

### Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation describes to whom someone is attracted. This includes attraction to the same gender (homosexual), opposite gender (heterosexual), and both genders (bisexual). Other orientations, often grouped under the term queer can include attraction to non binary genders or genders which don't fit under traditional concepts of male or female.

### Social model

The social model of (dis)ability is a reaction to the dominant medical model of (dis)ability which in itself is a functional analysis of the body as machine to be fixed in order to conform with normative values. The social model is based on the premise that sensory, physical, intellectual, psychosocial and other impairments are met with physical, attitudinal, and institutional barriers in society and it is these barriers that hinder the full and effective participation of people with (dis)abilities.

### Socio-economic status

Socioeconomic status is a societal construct that indicates an individual or group's social standing or class in respect to others in society. It is commonly measured by taking into consideration an individual or groups' education, income and occupation. There are three major categories referred to when allocating a socioeconomic status: high, middle, and low socioeconomic status.

### Tokenism

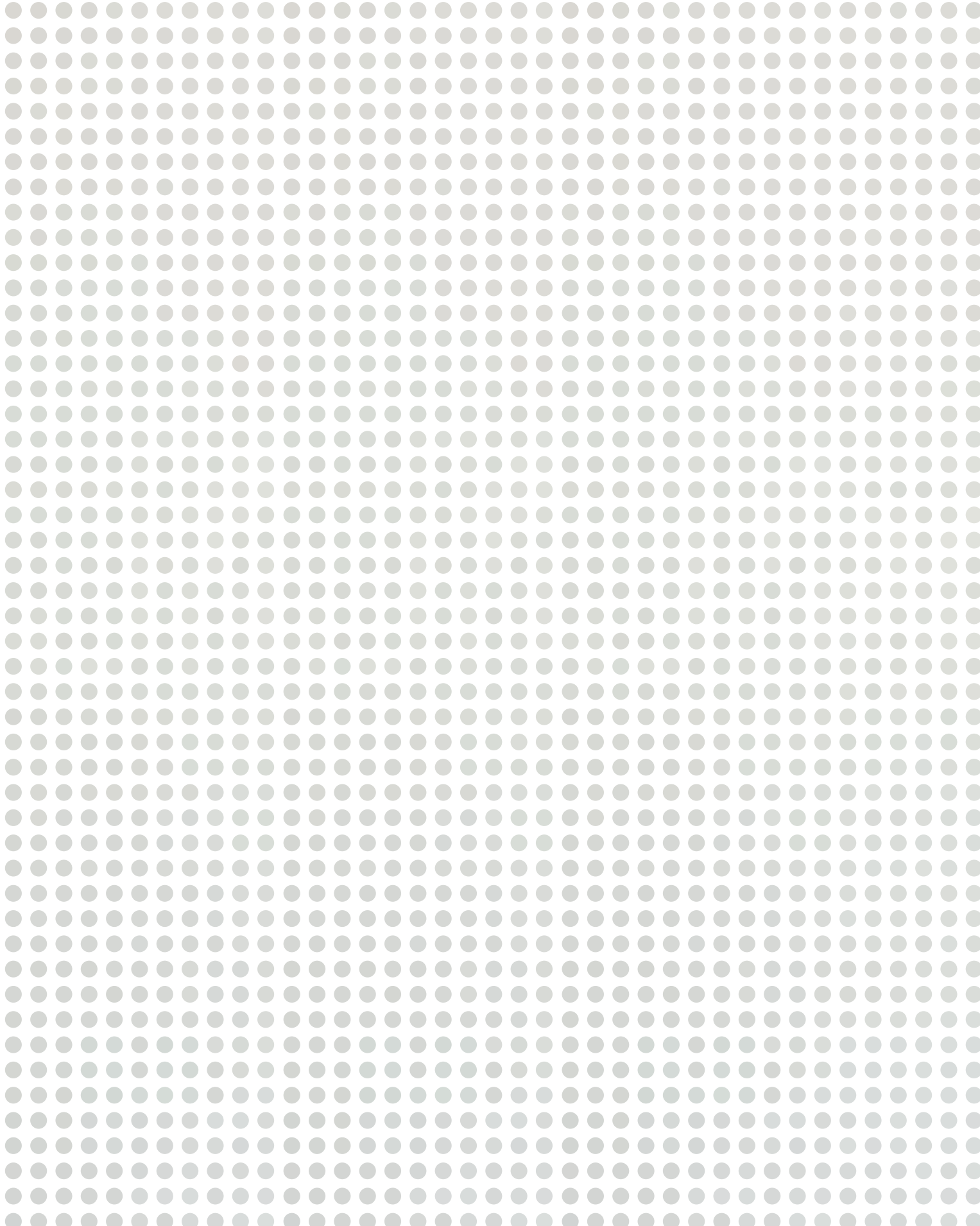
Making only a symbolic or the minimum effort to do a particular thing; often in relation to including a small number of people from under-represented groups in order to give the appearance of full inclusion or diversity.

### Trans

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/ or gender expression differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. This term can include many gender identities such as: transsexual, transgender, crossdresser, drag performer, androgynous, genderqueer, gender variant or differently gendered people.



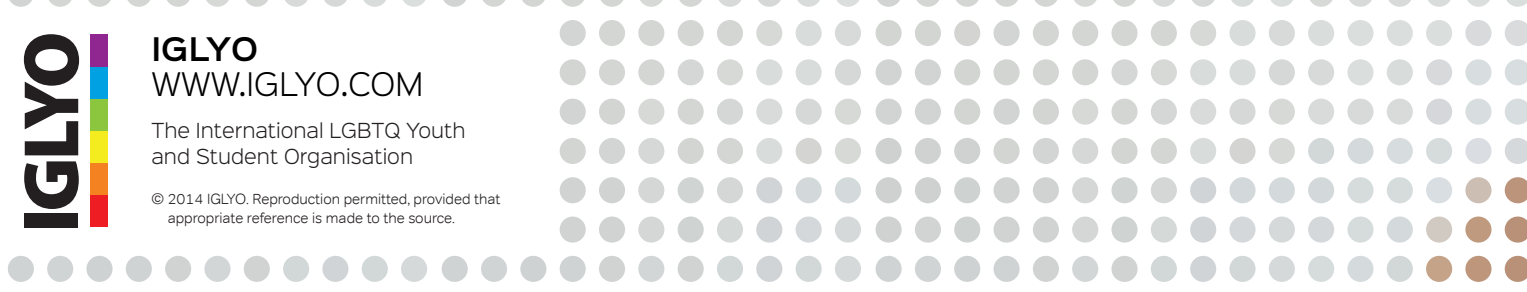
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# Everyone Belongs

## A Toolkit for Applying Intersectionality

By Joanna Simpson  
CRIAW/ICREF  
June 2009

CRIAW  
ICREF



# **Everyone Belongs: A toolkit for applying intersectionality**

**1<sup>st</sup> edition**

**May 2009**

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This toolkit was developed through a collaborative process with CRIAW's partners for the *Embracing the Complexities of Women's Lives* Project.

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For this project, CRIAW worked with the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa and the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association.



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The opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the official policy of Status of Women Canada.

Some of the opinions expressed in this document may not reflect the opinions or policies of our partners.

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Intersectionality displayed in a wheel diagram



- Innermost circle represents a person's unique circumstances.
- Second circle from inside represents aspects of identity.
- Third circle from the inside represents different types of discrimination/isms/attitudes that impact identity.
- Outermost circle represents larger forces and structures that work together to reinforce exclusion.

*Note it is impossible to name every discrimination, identity or structure. These are just examples to help give you a sense of what interectionality is.*

## **Introduction to the project and intersectionality**

### **The project and its partners**

In 2008, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW), received a grant from the Women's Program, Status of Women Canada, to undertake a one-year, community-based project called *Embracing the Complexity of Women's Lives*. Throughout the initiative, CRIAW worked collaboratively with three different Canadian social justice organizations to explore how intersectionality could be applied in practical ways to their policies, services, governance and other work.

For this project, CRIAW worked in partnership with the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa and the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association. Workshops and focus groups were held with staff, board members and community members involved with each partner group, on the topic of intersectionality.

The goal of intersectionality, as CRIAW sees it, is to strive for a world in which everyone, regardless of who they are or where they live, can live violence-free, access safe housing, have their voice heard and enjoy freedom from discrimination.

The goal of the workshops was to facilitate discussions on how an intersectional approach could foster each partner group's existing work. The project also sought to determine what tools CRIAW could develop to help with the application of intersectionality in non-profit groups. The structure and content of this toolkit is based on participant feedback received from the workshops and focus groups and is designed to respond to needs expressed by the partner groups.

### **Key points to consider regarding this project and toolkit**

The following are important points to consider when reading the content in this toolkit:

- CRIAW has tried very hard to capture a variety of perspectives and explore the complex nature of intersectionality; however, due to restrictions of time, resources and the number of partners CRIAW was able to work with we could not fully capture all of the different perspectives in great detail. For example, CRIAW did not work with any organizations serving Aboriginal Peoples so this toolkit provides a limited perspective with respect to First Nations, Inuit and Métis.
- Intersectionality takes into account how different kinds of discrimination work together. This toolkit lists many of those discriminations in different places; however, it should be noted that when listing discriminations it is hard to capture every experience or combination of experiences. Some



people believe that there is no end to diversity or discrimination and so this toolkit was not able to list every identity or form of discrimination. We did try to emphasize that it is not possible to look at every intersection at once but that it is important to listen and learn from people's unique histories.

- We tried as much as possible to make sure that this toolkit used plain language.
- CRIAW's previous publications mostly use the term *Intersectional Feminist Frameworks*. During our workshops, participants gave CRIAW the feedback that the term *intersectionality* resonated more for them than *intersectional feminist frameworks*; therefore, the term *intersectionality* will be used throughout most of the toolkit.
- This toolkit is a living document. If you have suggestions for improvement, we would be happy to get your feedback.

### **How you can use this tool**

This toolkit has been separated into different topic areas so that you can view the section(s) that are most relevant for you.

The topics in this toolkit reflect some of the suggestions and discussions that took place during the intersectionality workshops, including applying an intersectional perspective to policies, services and programs, research and community education. This toolkit is not designed to be a critical reflection piece. This toolkit is designed to be practical and to be accessible to many non profit organizations with varying missions and mandates. To learn more about the history and philosophy regarding intersectionality, we recommend reading some of the resources listed in the *Resource* section.

Although intersectionality can be hard to apply given limitations with staff, volunteer and financial resources that many non-profit groups experience, this resource is intended to offer concrete and practical suggestions and tools for organizations that are interested in opening their doors wider to the communities they serve.

## **Intersectionality**

### **Intersectionality includes everybody**

Intersectionality is not something new. Many activists and thinkers helped to inform our current understanding of intersectional issues, particularly people who were part of human rights movements.<sup>1</sup> Many grassroots women's groups in the 1970s and 1980s sought to break down the hierarchies that create inequalities, such as patriarchy and capitalism. Also, women like Sojourner Truth have contributed to the development of intersectionality. Truth was a former slave in the United States who demonstrated that the concept of "woman" was culturally constructed through the discrepancies between her experience as an African-



American woman and the qualities ascribed to women, during a speech that was recorded at a women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio in 1851.<sup>2</sup>

The actual term *intersectionality* first appeared in an article by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, published in 1991, which articulated the relationship between sex, gender, nation, race and class:

<http://www.wcsap.org/Events/Workshop07/mapping-margins.pdf>

Crenshaw wanted to show how black African American women had been excluded from women's equality struggles, particularly as it pertained to violence against women.<sup>3</sup>

Although the word intersectionality is a more recent term, it should be noted that for centuries, Aboriginal Peoples have been using a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. Indeed "[...] for Indigenous Peoples living in Canada and around the world, the inter-relationships between the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects of being are integral to individual and community health."<sup>4</sup> Intersectionality takes a holistic approach because it involves looking at things together, for example, viewing race and gender together, as opposed to viewing them in isolation.

So then, a big part of intersectionality is about taking into account people's experiences and identities without placing them into fixed categories. Consider for a moment this quote from poet and activist Audre Lorde: "As a forty-nine-year-old Black lesbian feminist Socialist mother of two, including one boy, and a member of an inter-racial couple, I usually find myself a part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong."<sup>5</sup>

In order to understand Lorde's experience, we can't just apply a strictly anti-racist or anti-homophobic or gender equality perspective. Her identities cannot be seen as standing alone and like Lorde, we all have our own unique histories and experiences that determine our social location. However, depending on who we are, we can experience greater or lesser degrees of privilege and exclusion. Sometimes we can be privileged in some ways and not in others.

The rationale for an intersectional approach though, is not to show who is worse off in society but as the Association for Women's Rights in Development notes "[...] to reveal meaningful distinctions and similarities in order to overcome discriminations and put the conditions in place for all people to fully enjoy their human rights."<sup>6</sup> In this sense, intersectionality includes everybody.

Although the term intersectionality arose out of feminism, it can be applied to the experiences and circumstances of people of all genders. Furthermore, intersectionality is centred on the perspectives of those with the least amount of power, which are more often women and girls.<sup>7</sup>

**How and why this perspective can benefit your organization**

We all want to be included, to be safe and to be financially secure. Yet this is not the case for everyone. While technology has rapidly increased so has the gap between the rich and poor. Take Canada for example--a country which until the most recent 2009 recession had boasted a decade of surpluses. In a country that had excess money, there were still homeless people, people without safe housing and women enduring violence from their partners.

In Canada, there are a disproportionate number of sole support mothers, disabled, elderly, racialized and immigrant women who are living in poverty.<sup>8</sup> Here is one example that shows some income related statistics from the 2006 Canadian census comparing Canadian born men and women to men and women who immigrated to Canada. The age range for the people represented in this data is 25-54. Note: *Recent Immigrants* for 2005 is defined by Statistics Canada as immigrants who immigrated to Canada between 2000 and 2004.

**Median Earnings/year**

	Canadian born population (men)	Canadian-born population (women)	Immigrant population (men)	Immigrant population (women)	Recent Immigrant population (men)	Recent Immigrant population (women)
<b>With a University Degree</b>	\$ 62,566	\$ 44,545	\$ 42,998	\$ 30,633	\$ 30,332	\$ 18,969
<b>Without a University Degree</b>	\$ 40,235	\$ 25,590	\$ 33,814	\$ 22,382	\$ 24,470	\$ 14,233

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census data (for the year 2005)<sup>9</sup>

Even though these statistics only provide limited information, they do show an intersection between immigration status, arrival to Canada, education and gender. As the barriers increase, so too does the severity of the poverty. For instance, women without university degrees who are recent immigrants to Canada earn a lower salary on average than the overall immigrant population and over \$10, 000 less than Canadian born women without university degrees. Furthermore, women in each category earn substantially less than men and even Canadian born women with a university degree only earn about \$4, 000 more a year than Canadian born men without a university degree. Women who are recent immigrants earn only \$14, 233/year on average which is very low for a single person. A woman making that income, living with a disability and raising three children alone, will experience even greater hardship.

Keep in mind that there are differences in earnings within and between groups and individuals and that statistics do not take into account individual histories and experiences. Differences in power, privilege and poverty are much more complex than this.

In order to create a fair and equal society, it is very important to include those who are most marginalized and advocate for more inclusive policies and programs. Intersectionality offers a perspective that takes into account the full range of identities and circumstances facing people. Applying intersectionality to our work means that we, as people, have to change the way we think about and view things like identity, power and equality.<sup>10</sup> When no one is excluded, we all benefit!

### **Policies that reflect intersectionality**

Applying an intersectional lens to policy means that our internal operations and structures would be critically examined to make sure they reflect diverse women's interests and experiences.<sup>11</sup> It is not about accommodating people, but rather, it is about putting a structure in place that is inclusive to all. A participant in one of the intersectionality workshops pointed out that for an organization to apply this perspective, intersectionality has to be a fundamental mindset.

### **CRIAW and intersectional feminist frameworks**

Developing policies that reflect intersectionality takes time and commitment. Throughout the years, CRIAW has had to adapt and refine its policies to become more inclusive as an organization; however, none of these changes happened overnight. Rather, they happened incrementally throughout the years as new situations and issues emerged. Moreover, CRIAW has not finished making changes—shifting to an intersectional framework is a work in progress. In some ways, the work is never complete because issues and politics will always shift and change over time and as organizations, we will have to adapt.

For some time, CRIAW has been looking at alternative ways of doing social justice work, which came out of the recognition that women's realities revolve around much more than just their gender. In 2004, CRIAW began exploring intersectional feminist frameworks (IFFs) as a way of re-thinking mainstream approaches to social and economic justice. CRIAW also began to find ways of using the framework to improve internal policies and research on women.

For CRIAW, “IFF’s attempt to understand how multiple forces work together and interact to reinforce conditions of inequality and social exclusion. IFFs examine how factors including socio-economic status, race, class, gender, sexualities, ability, geographic location, refugee and immigrant status, combine with broader historical and current systems of discrimination such as colonialism and globalization to simultaneously determine inequalities among individuals and groups.”<sup>12</sup>

## **Examples of policy changes at CRIAW**

In the late 1980s, CRIAW, along with other social justice organizations, began to recognize the need to become more diverse and inclusive. CRIAW slowly began to implement policies to become inclusive to more groups, for example, racialized women. Later, the organization came to the realization that simply adding groups or categories of people was not enough. That is when intersectional feminist frameworks were developed.

The following are a few examples of how CRIAW developed policies to correspond with its overall vision of creating an organization where women across Canada could fully participate as board members, employees, volunteers and allies.

### ***Examples:***

#### **(a) Greater inclusion of francophone women on the CRIAW board (1990-1991)**

In 1990, CRIAW Board Members proposed the following amendments to the constitution:

- 1. To increase the pool from which the President Elect may be chosen.*
- 2. To broaden participation on the CRIAW Board and committees.*
- 3. To increase Francophone representation on the Board.*

The process of making these amendments took a year to complete. It began in 1990 and the amendments were passed in November of 1991. Within that frame of time, proposed amendments were sent to all of CRIAW's Members prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM). During the AGM, the amendments were proposed and discussed, with the feedback of the Members.

The whole idea of increasing Francophone representation on the Board was to provide more opportunities for Francophone women living outside the Province of Quebec to be involved with CRIAW, for example, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, etc. As a bilingual organization, this was something that CRIAW felt was important. Currently 25% of Board Members must be Francophone.

#### **(b) Development of CRIAW's vision statement (1991-1992)**

In 1991, CRIAW participated in an Anti-racism conference in Toronto. During the conference CRIAW went through a process of analyzing the organization in terms of its accessibility and explored how racism was occurring both within CRIAW and within society as a whole. Part of the process involved a discussion about how CRIAW wanted to proceed with respect to diversifying the organization.

CRIAW felt that it could diversify the organization by building broader representation among its board, staff and volunteers by including more “[...] racialized women, women from different cultural backgrounds, women with disabilities, poor women, women who did not work in universities, working class women, lesbian women, rural women, francophone women,” amongst others.<sup>13</sup>

After the Anti-Racism Conference, CRIAW began to re-think what it wanted to accomplish as an organization. In June of 1991, CRIAW’s Board of Directors had a discussion about CRIAW’s vision and mandate. After fifteen years of conducting feminist research, CRIAW felt that it was important to examine the original objective of CRIAW to determine if it adequately reflected CRIAW’s goals. One of the questions explored was whether or not CRIAW’s work advanced the status of all women.

CRIAW made it a priority to develop a renewed vision statement, to clarify its role and values and to develop priorities for the coming years.

At the November 1991 Board meeting, the Board agreed on a draft vision statement and a set of goals and objectives. Once the draft was finished, it was circulated to CRIAW’s Membership for comment, through its quarterly newsletter. Following this, a special retreat was held in June of 1992, to consider the comments from CRIAW’s Membership.

### **(c) Developing policies to reflect intersectional feminist frameworks (2003-2004)**

The visioning process resumed in CRIAW in 2003 when the organization developed the following vision statement with intersectionality in mind:

*CRIAW is working to create a world in which individuals of all genders, races, cultures, languages, incomes, abilities, sexualities, religions, identities, ages and experiences fully partake of, and contribute to, a just, violence-free, balanced and joyful society that respects the human dignity of all. It is a world constantly opening to new ideas, new perspectives, new energy. It is a world where people and communities share resources and work together, to form an integrated picture in which every contribution is precious, and all people are valued and useful. And it is a society connected to, and respectful of, the earth and the universe.\**

This vision statement is what guides the work of CRIAW today.

In November of 2003, a *Strategic Planning Working Group*, composed of CRIAW staff and Board, met to develop a strategic plan framework. The framework included a revision of CRIAW’s mission and the development of CRIAW’s external strategic priorities, such as encouraging researchers and policy makers to use an *integrated feminist analysis*.<sup>14</sup>

One of the major areas of focus for CRIAW's strategic planning process was its internal governance and board structures, including board representation and composition. The dialogue around board governance and composition continued into 2004. Once again, the strong message that came through was the need to be more representative of different groups at the board level. The point was raised that at the time there was no representation of Aboriginal women or women with visible disabilities on the board. It was felt that constitutional amendments were needed in order to bring the missing voices to the table.

Along with passing the constitutional amendments, CRIAW also affirmed IFFs as an overall approach for the organization. In the words of Jo-Anne Lee (CRIAW President, 2004-2005): "The evolving IFF (Integrated Feminist Framework) methodology will ensure that it is not just about race, class and gender, but also about a political commitment and a value position with reference to social and economic justice."<sup>15</sup>

The following is a summary of the significant changes that were made to CRIAW's constitution, in an effort to increase Board diversity:

***CRIAW's Constitution prior to changes being made:***

CRIAW's Board had to be comprised of at least one Director from each province and territory, along with six Directors at large, including at least one person from Quebec. Beyond regional representation, there were no other specific criteria for the Nominations Committee to consider.

***CRIAW's Constitution after changes were made:***

Instead of having representatives from each province and territory, Directors are now selected *with particular attention to balancing the following criteria:*

- i. Regional Representation:***  
Rather than having representation from each province and territory, six different regions have been identified: British Columbia, the Prairies, the Territories, Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces.
- ii. Equity Groups:***  
Four different broad equity groups have been listed including *racialized women, women with disabilities, sexual minorities, and Aboriginal women.*
- iii. Language:***  
25% of Board Members must be Francophone. This percentage was also reflected in the *Official Languages* policy. Prior to this, the policy only stated that the official languages of CRIAW are English and French and added that CRIAWs committees should *incorporate language diversity.* There was no mandated percentage.

**iv. Skills:**

Women will also be identified based on the skills needed to carry out CRIAW's strategic priorities during a given point in time.

**Policies relating to accessibility**

***Accessibility defined***

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word 'accessible', means "providing access."<sup>16</sup> The word 'access' means the "freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something."<sup>17</sup> If we use this definition as a guide, being accessible as an organization means that we need to make sure that people can make use of our services, programs, research, activities, physical space and other areas of our organizations.

Often accessibility is viewed strictly in terms of persons living with disabilities. This section is designed to expand this view and consider other ways of being accessible. Please note that these are just a few examples to get you thinking-it is not an exhaustive list.

***Accessibility for people with disabilities***

According to a recent Canadian survey dealing with attitudes about people with disabilities, only 1 in 10 people polled thought that persons living with disabilities are fully included in society.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the lack of inclusion of persons living with disabilities, along with a lack of proper supports, contributes to the poverty that many persons living with disabilities and their families face.<sup>19</sup> Along with physical and intellectual disabilities, there are many kinds of invisible disabilities that often go unnoticed, such as chronic fatigue, and mental health concerns, to name a couple. With Canada's aging population, the proportion of people with disabilities will increase over the next several years.

A widely held understanding of "disability" and "accessibility" places the emphasis on the way society is organized, rather than on particular impairments that the individual may have. People with disabilities may be challenged more by systemic barriers and inadequate accessibility within the community than by their own circumstances. It is not the disability, but the way society is organized (barriers to accessing activities of daily living) which determines the life experience of people with disabilities.

*What we call an "ability" and a "disability" has a long way to go. There are many people with profound disabilities who are up and working and involved. The key is to broaden the definition of "access". Make sure it includes the reality for people with sensory, physical, developmental, psychiatric, learning and multiple disabilities. If your basic needs are met through appropriate income and access then "disability" means something completely different.<sup>20</sup>*



DAWN (Disabled Women's Network) Canada has created an excellent checklist relating to accessibility for people with disabilities:

[http://dawn.thot.net/access\\_checklist\\_full.html](http://dawn.thot.net/access_checklist_full.html)

### ***Accessibility for transgendered people***

“A transgendered person is someone whose gender identity or expression differs from conventional expectations of masculinity or femininity. Transgender or trans-identified is often used as a catch-all term for gender variant people.”<sup>21</sup>

Although not a lot of research has been done on violence and discrimination experienced by transgendered people, the research that has been done suggests that the incidence is very high.<sup>22</sup> Transgendered people who are part of other marginalized groups experience an even greater degree of discrimination.

When thinking about accessibility for transgendered people, you may want to consider things like having a gender neutral bathroom, instead of ones marked “male” and “female” and having registration forms that do not make people specify their gender.

### ***Accessibility for different religions and cultures***

Canada is considered a multicultural society that has rights enshrined in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Despite protective mechanisms, there is significant discrimination that occurs against people based on their religion or cultural background.

When thinking about accessibility for different religions and cultures, here are a few things you may want to consider:

- Making sure you meet or exceed all legal requirements for accommodation, including those in Human Rights legislation, employment law and any legislation with respect to accessibility for people with disabilities. An example of this would be allowing people to take time off for religious days other than the Christian based holidays that are typically taken off. For example, Christmas, Easter, etc.
- Offering staff/volunteers/students the space and time to conduct religious prayers.
- Thinking about ways that your organization can embrace or further embrace and celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity.

### ***Accessibility for different languages***

In Canada there are two official languages, English and French; however, many other languages are spoken in this country. If people cannot read or speak the

language used in publications, pamphlets, services and programs, then they will not be able to access them.

You may want to consider having your resources available in different languages, audio formats and Braille, if your budget will permit it. You can also write your resources in plain language.

### **Policies relating to human resources**

“Canadian human rights legislation recognizes that true equality means respect for people’s different needs. In employment, this means valuing and accommodating differences so that all employees can work to the best of their ability.”<sup>23</sup>

Under Canadian law, equality is recognized and acknowledged; however, those who experience discrimination know that this right is not always protected. People face many barriers to employment, including lack of access to education and training programs required for the job market, specific language training for the workplace and adequate childcare, among other reasons.

When considering policies around staffing, training and/or volunteer recruitment you can try using some of these questions as a guide:

- Have we made sure we comply with or exceed all legal obligations with respect to employment standards, human rights, employment equity, legislation with respect to accessibility for people with disabilities, union contracts and so on?
- Do job postings encourage people who face multiple barriers to accessing jobs to apply for positions?
- Do hiring policies exclude anyone? How? Who?
- Is there an equity policy in place? Is it working? Do people know about it?
- Is the office accessible to people with diverse disabilities (including physical space, communication structures, etc.)?
- Are people who have historically been excluded from society encouraged to apply for jobs? For example, racialized people, transgendered people, people with disabilities, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, or people with multiple and overlapping identities? (please note that these are just a few examples - it is not a complete list).
- Are employees eligible for benefits for themselves and their families?
- Are there flexible working hours? For example, can staff have the option of working at home, such as a sole support parent who does not have child care?
- Is hiring based on education alone, or are other types of experience considered too? For example, a person who does not have a university degree but has relevant experience can be just as competent as someone with a university degree.

- Most job candidates do not match all of the job requirements perfectly. Are you able to develop employees' skills so that they can better perform their job? For example, French language training for a person who only speaks English.
- Are standards for hiring based only on Western practices? For example, are candidates ranked higher if they are dressed more conservatively, have a firm handshake and make a lot of eye contact, or does the organization account for differences in presentation and communication style?
- Is foreign work experience and education recognized?

Something else to consider is how power is shared in your organization. Intersectionality looks at power and privilege and this lens can be applied to the organizational structure. How are decisions made within the organization—collectively or by management? Is there a distinct hierarchy within the organization or is the structure more circular with power being shared among staff?

### **Considerations for Boards of Directors**

If you decide to apply an intersectional lens to your policies, some people may resist the idea.

Boards of Directors need to be open to changes in policy for intersectionality to work. Discussing intersectional issues can cause tension so it is important to have an open space to discuss the issues. Staff and board alike need to feel safe when having important discussions relating to policies and practices. A participant in one of the intersectionality workshops pointed out that if the board is not making a strategic intersectional analysis, then it won't permit the staff to carry out that analysis.

The following are a few ideas that Boards of Directors can consider with respect to intersectionality:

- Ensure that current and new board members understand the intersectional approach and ways of applying it. For example, board members could be briefed or trained on the approach.
- Attracting new board members to the organization who have knowledge on issues of inclusion and value the approach.
- Consider how to attract a diverse membership without expecting members to represent an entire group (tokenism).
- Consider ways to make the membership and board more diverse.
- Some organizations, such as Egale Canada, have developed a separate *Intersections Committee* to oversee the application of an intersectional approach into different aspects of the organization.<sup>24</sup>

- If you receive a grant to hire someone and the budget only covers health benefits for the new staff member, will you be able to allocate additional money if the employee has children who also require health benefits?
- When the board reviews different policies, does it take the time to reflect on how the organization's policies factor in the needs of different communities? For example, women, people with disabilities, LGBTTT2IQQ people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Transexual, 2-Spirited, Intersexed, Queer, Questioning), racialized people, to give a few examples. Do the policies take into account people who experience multiple discriminations?
- Does the board regularly review organizational policies and practices to see whether or not they limit opportunities for different groups? For example, human resources policies.

Volunteer BC has an excellent a-z directory on board governance for newer and older boards: <http://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/resources/governance/index.html>

Applying an intersectional framework to policies can be a challenging process. Organizations cannot make big changes overnight-it takes time, commitment and an honest belief in the need to prioritize the experiences and histories of people who experience the greatest degrees of marginalization. Diverse voices and perspectives can help shape and drive organizational policies through a consensual process. For CRIAW, the process has been a long one and there are still many areas of the organization that CRIAW will continue working on such as increasing the physical accessibility of the office space. With time and effort, we will get there.

### **Developing services, programs and projects that reflect intersectionality**

Applying an intersectional approach to service and program delivery requires that the unique experiences and backgrounds of service users be prioritized and accounted for. Having program participants and service users inform program development is an important step towards greater inclusiveness. Community members are the experts when it comes to the needs, hopes and dreams for their community.<sup>25</sup>

When developing new programs, services or projects, organizations can discuss at the outset how an intersectional approach will be applied. An overarching vision or framework for your organization, which guides all activities, can be a good reference point for program development.

This section is designed to provide some ideas and suggestions for reaching out to marginalized communities, taking into account people's unique histories, ensuring that programs and services are accessible and evaluating your

programs and services. This section combines notions of intersectionality and community development.

### **Reaching the most marginalized**

Where programs and services are designed to serve specific populations, for example, settlement services for new immigrants, programs for Aboriginal women, support groups for sole support parents, etc., it can be difficult not to fall into the trap of making general assumptions about those populations without taking into account differences within their communities. For example, many of us have probably heard generalized statements about groups of people before such as “aboriginal people are poor,” or “women are oppressed” and because certain groups of people do statistically experience greater amounts of poverty and exclusion, they often tend to get slapped with those labels. Thus, “[...] assumptions are often made about what a community is and what it has going for or against it”<sup>26</sup> [without having consulted with that community and involved its members in program delivery]. Carrying out accurate research is also crucial in this process (see section 6, Research that reflects intersectionality)

We need to be able to recognize differences with respect to privilege and oppression and keep in mind how we can be simultaneously privileged and excluded. As one example, within and among First Nations communities, there are differences in access to money, power, jobs and respect on the basis of ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, family history, age, social connections, Indian Status, Band status, geographic location (rural or urban), self-government/land claim status, history of colonization, extent of residential school involvement, language and culture.<sup>27</sup> When developing programs and services, taking into account differences within communities will help to make these programs and services more inclusive and welcoming.

Here are some things that you may want to consider with respect to engaging with communities:

- Building on a community’s strengths can be a good strategy for creating awareness and motivation.
- The experience of systemic discrimination and/or abuse can cause people to distrust programs/services. For example, mistreatment from police and/or other service providers, experience with a discriminatory immigration system, etc.
- Are there any barriers to accessing services such as transportation, language barriers, physical access barriers, childcare, etc?
- If there are barriers, how can they be overcome? In one of the intersectionality workshops, a participant talked about a women’s support group, where they were able to hire childcare providers so that a greater diversity of women could attend. The childcare costs were built into the project budget.

- We can't expect that communities will come to us. We need to reach out to them and involve community members in program delivery.
- Keep in mind that the role of service and program providers is to listen to what the community wants and to help support it, not to just create programs.
- Consider having flexible hours for services. For example, offering programs at different times of the day to accommodate differences in people's work / school / care-giving schedules.

One way to become more connected to the community(ies) you serve is to conduct a community assessment, which involves gathering information about your community(ies). It is important to note that many non-profit agencies do not have the human and financial resources available to conduct this kind of assessment; however, there may be existing information that can be tapped.

If you are able to conduct an assessment, consider current and projected demographics, social issues, economic issues, environmental issues and issues and opportunities from the perspectives of community members and leaders.<sup>28</sup> Keeping in mind the intersectional approach, you may want to think about how these issues interact and contribute to conditions of privilege and exclusion for community members. As well, communities change over time and so do the various issues and opportunities. Knowing the history of your community may help to put the current issues into context.

### **Thinking beyond your deliverables**

Many non-profit organizations are limited in terms of human and financial resources. In all three intersectionality workshops that CRIAW facilitated, staff commented that they often have so much on their plates that it is hard to find extra time for anything else.

When individual staff are stretched very thin and working lots of extra hours, taking time to make sure an intersectional approach is being applied to programs, services and projects can be challenging; however, if intersectional policies are built into our organizational structures, it will have a direct impact on how service delivery is carried out. For example, if an organization has an accessibility policy in place that addresses the barriers that service/program users face, for example, barriers for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, language barriers, transportation, to name a few, then the space will be more welcoming for different groups. Moreover, if an organization values a bottom up approach to service and program delivery, program participants and service users may be involved in evaluating and influencing changes in service delivery. In this way, program participants will be able to help shape services to better meet their needs.

Most community based programs and services rely on a separate funding body for financial resources. Along with funding, most funders have a set of requirements that have to be met. Often this comes in the form of eligibility

criteria and certain deliverables that must be met within a given time-frame. One of CRIAW's partners pointed out that eligibility criteria force program staff to turn people away from programs if they do not meet the set criteria. Although this sort of limitation can force organizations to be less inclusive or face losing funding, there are ways to establish a more inclusive environment for those who can access the services. As well, organizations can point out to their funders how such criteria is increasing exclusion and what the effects are on the community.

Most funders do not currently use an intersectional approach themselves and may not even be aware of what the approach is. Because of this, applying an intersectional approach will involve going beyond the basic deliverables to apply an overall intersectional lens. Also, keep in mind that an intersectional approach and effective inclusion can take time, and may be challenging within strict project timelines.

Organizations may also want to consider forming partnerships or coalitions with other social justice groups that serve different communities, for example, First Nations, Métis or Inuit organizations, LGBTT2QI organizations, etc. Establishing collaborative programs, services and projects will allow for different perspectives and points of view to be heard.

When designing new programs or projects, the project design is very important. If organizations commit to applying an intersectional approach, the framework can be built into the overall design of the program or project. Moreover, using this approach in an analytical way “[...] *requires that we see the eradication of discrimination and the celebration of diversity as fundamental to development and the enjoyment of human rights.*”<sup>29</sup> For this to happen, a genuine commitment is needed from key players, staff, board and committees.

### **How to evaluate your services/programs/projects**

Any sort of planning process around services, programs and projects should involve an evaluation.<sup>30</sup> If an organization is applying an intersectional approach, there has to be a way to figure out how the approach is working in order to determine whether anything needs to be changed. Evaluations do not need to be very complicated. In fact, “[...] evaluation is simply a tool that helps you understand if you are on track and achieving results that will move you towards your vision.”<sup>31</sup>

There are four basic questions that organizations can explore with respect to an evaluation.<sup>32</sup>

#### **1. *What worked and why?***<sup>33</sup>

You may want to ask program participants what they thought worked and why so that your initiative can be informed from the bottom up.

#### **2. *What did not work and why?***<sup>34</sup>

Having program participants provide feedback can help ensure that the next initiative is more accessible.

**3. What could have been done differently?<sup>35</sup>**

You may want to reflect on whether your approach increased inclusiveness. Does your approach need re-thinking at all?

**4. What adjustments and changes are required now?<sup>36</sup>**

You may want to consider how any needed changes could further an intersectional approach.

If evaluations have been well thought out and incorporate feedback from program participants, they may provide a means to continue programs or develop new ones. Often funding agencies want to know organizations' past achievements in order to determine whether or not to support new projects.<sup>37</sup>

Here are some things you may want to consider with respect to evaluating your programs/services/projects:

- You may want to keep track of who is and who is not accessing your services. If you haven't been able to reach certain populations or communities, try to reflect on why that may be the case.
- In order to value the contributions of the community(ies) you are serving, you may want to have participants fill out program evaluations.
- Participants could have a role in creating the evaluation process.
- Remember that evaluations are not just about numbers and quotas.

**Research that reflects intersectionality**

The following section provides some suggestions and general information on how the intersectional approach could be applied to your research. For more in-depth information on each stage of the research process, you can look at CRIAW's resource: *Using Intersectional Feminist Frameworks in Research*. You can order this resource from CRIAW online at [www.criaw-icref.ca](http://www.criaw-icref.ca) or send an email to [info@criaw-icref.ca](mailto:info@criaw-icref.ca).

Please note that there are many different kinds of research that organizations do. As a participant pointed out in one of the focus groups, a lot of community based research does not have a specific research question.

This section will probably be most helpful for groups that do participatory action research.

Participants expressed an interest in learning more about research ethics. The following resource relates to research ethics: *Considerations and Templates for Ethical Research Practices*, which is a resource that the First Nations Centre of



the Aboriginal Health Organization developed, around participatory research with First Nations Communities:

[http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC\\_ConsiderationsandTemplatesInformationResource.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC_ConsiderationsandTemplatesInformationResource.pdf)

### **Applying an intersectional perspective to research**

There is some research that involves people in positions of power making decisions about how the research will be done. This includes things like which participants to select, what kind of analysis will be used, what the research question will be (if there is one), etc. Using an intersectional approach, on the other hand, involves “[...] valuing a bottom up approach to research, analysis and planning by gathering information on how women and men actually live their lives.”<sup>38</sup>

Intersectionality can be incorporated into all of the steps and phases of the research process from defining the research question to how you disseminate the research. The very first step involved with using this approach, however, is making a commitment to using an intersectional approach, even though it may complicate the research process.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the Women’s Health Research Network in British Columbia pointed out: “trying to understand the health of a woman within a broader context [sociocultural, economic, gender/sexuality based, etc.] complicate [sic] the research questions being asked.”<sup>40</sup>

When deciding what organizations or groups to partner with for research, you can look for groups that value the same kind of approach to research. Research teams and advisory bodies such as steering committees can often be helpful for accessing participants, making sure that the research design is effective and the analysis is meaningful and can reach larger networks of people with the research results.<sup>41</sup>

It is important to note that it is rare for a study to look at every possible intersection--some studies will state from the beginning which intersections they will examine.<sup>42</sup> The language you use for your study will partly depend on your style, who is funding the project and what community(ies) you are trying to reach.<sup>43</sup>

### **Involving people who experience marginalization in the research process**

Involving people who experience marginalization in the research process is a very important part of using an intersectional approach. Moreover, “[...] it requires making a commitment to thinking carefully about placing the experiences and perspectives of people with the least social, economic and political power front and centre throughout the research process.”<sup>44</sup>

So how does one go about selecting participants? Often researchers identify participants by approaching advocacy organizations; however, the organizations

your approach may not reflect the entire community you are researching.<sup>45</sup> For example, in one of CRIAW's studies, some women living with disabilities in Winnipeg did not feel that white/male-dominated disability organizations reflected their experiences very well.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, most of us belong to more than one community at a given time and if we are being excluded, we may not spend much time in mainstream organizations whose mandate is to serve the community that excludes us. Thus, approaching anti-poverty organizations and different types of advocacy organizations such as First Nations, Inuit, Métis, immigrant, seniors' and youth organizations, amongst others, may be helpful.<sup>47</sup>

Once participants are selected, they can be involved in the research process. To start, you could involve participants in shaping the research question. For example, in a study conducted by the National Anti-Poverty Organization in 2004 on homeless women, the definition of "homeless" was left up to the women who responded to the study's call for interviews.<sup>48</sup> The study was then able to show that a home is more than just having shelter, "[...] it is also a place where they, as women, can be safe and secure and have a little privacy and control over their living spaces."<sup>49</sup> When it came time to disseminating the research, the final report highlighted the stories and perspectives of the women participants.<sup>50</sup>

Participants can also be involved in deciding what kinds of issues or problems need to be researched within their communities. This type of community development approach involves centering the research on the needs of the community being studied, making the research relevant for that community. For more information on community development, please read the *Developing services, programs and projects that reflect intersectionality* section of this toolkit (p. 18).

Something else to keep in mind is how your research will benefit the participants. Part of this can involve sharing resources with participants, sharing skills and information and creating networks among participants.<sup>51</sup> Along with this, some researchers pay honoraria to participants for sharing their experiences. It is important to note, however, that some people feel that paying participants can be a way of forcing them to participate because it is difficult for someone with very little income to turn money away.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, a participant in one of the focus groups pointed out that some researchers feel that it is unethical not to offer participants compensation for their time and involvement.

Sometimes, as in the following case example, the researchers can also be a part of the community being studied, although this is not always possible.

### **A case in point: intersectional research on the Vancouver transit system**

The Vancouver Bus Rider's Union applied an intersectional analysis to the Vancouver transit system, which involved holding consultations across the city, coupled with presenting background information on colonialization, globalization, poverty and the transit system.<sup>53</sup>

The study was called *Women in Transit: Organizing for Social Justice in Our Communities*. The study was a participatory action research project, which explained links between racism, sexism, the environment and the economic system that separates people by class, including wealthy and middle classes and those who struggle to survive.<sup>54</sup> As a means of finding women who could point out such links, the study sponsored consultations within the community in a high school, various women's centres, a housing coop, the Multicultural Family Centre African Women's Saturday program, amongst other locations.<sup>55</sup>

The study used both qualitative data (women's experiences) and quantitative data (pre-existing statistics on the topic). It showed that people who were relying on public transit were mostly poor and that women, people of colour and Aboriginal peoples were disproportionately represented because they were part of the most excluded sectors of the working class and could not afford to buy cars.<sup>56</sup>

The women who made up the research team were, themselves, transit dependent.<sup>57</sup> The project also worked to empower other transit dependent women, by training working class women to struggle against the interests of the government of the time and assert their right to mobility and public transit.<sup>58</sup>

To read the full report online and to find out more about the methodology used and the findings of the study, please look for the URL in the *Resources* section of this toolkit (p. 35).

### **CRIAW's partners making a difference in their communities**

During the intersectionality workshops, participants spent a fair bit of time identifying areas where their respective organizations had been and had not been applying an intersectional lens, in order to facilitate a discussion about how the framework could be advanced within each organization. The following examples highlight initiatives that our partner groups have been involved with, which reflect some principles of intersectionality.

#### **The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg: *Making Poverty History Manitoba*<sup>59</sup>**

While the word intersectionality may not enter into this initiative, many of its principles are reflected. Make Poverty History Manitoba is a coalition of over thirty Winnipeg organizations from the business, education, student, Aboriginal, newcomer, labour, women's, health and disability communities and agencies.

Inspired by Quebec's *Bill 112: An Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion*, the Women's Health Clinic, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence and other coalition groups, led discussions

in the community about Quebec's anti-poverty legislation and how it came to be enacted.

To give a bit of background information, in Quebec, a coalition of citizens and communities worked together to draft a legislative proposal relating to poverty and exclusion, which was then adapted and made in to law by the Quebec National Assembly. With the enactment of the bill, came the recognition of poverty and social exclusion as central policy priorities. Moreover, poverty and exclusion were formally placed on the public agenda. The development was the first of its kind and was made possible by the widespread support that it received throughout the province.

Given that the Manitoba government had not previously taken steps to address the issues of poverty and social exclusion, the community began to take action by engaging with legislators, community leaders, diverse sectors and the public at large on poverty and social exclusion in the Manitoba context. The main message heard from Manitobans through the consultations was that small adjustments to existing policies and programs are not enough and that the province needs to take comprehensive and systemic action to reduce poverty and increase social and economic inclusion.

According to Make Poverty History Manitoba this action should include:

- *An integrated and coordinated approach to programs and services to reduce both the incidence and the depth of poverty and social exclusion and associated effects.*
- *Gender and diversity analysis as part of all policy and program development processes.*
- *Long term and annual action plans designed and implemented with participation from multiple stakeholders.*
- *Increased social investment reflected in Provincial budget expenses and revenues.*
- *Targets, timelines, and benchmarks with ongoing monitoring and reporting to ensure that objectives are being met.*
- *A multi-sectoral and cross-departmental authority to oversee progress and make further recommendations.*<sup>60</sup>

The coalition outlined specific outcomes and actions relating to jurisdictional areas of the province of Manitoba including housing, income security, labour market, education, recreation, transportation, disability supports, health and mental health. They also recognized the importance of increased investment and action at the Federal level, because the impact of decreased federal spending on social programs over the years has trickled down into the provinces and territories, leaving many without economic and social security.

The coalition is working towards developing realistic recommendations for the government of Manitoba to reduce poverty in the province. Various research and reports on the issues have been synthesized, in order to prepare accessible discussion papers on poverty reduction.

To learn more about this initiative:

<http://spcw.mb.ca/files/file/MPHM%20Discussion%20Paper%20081203.pdf>

**The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO):<sup>61</sup>**  
***Kids and Community Project***

The Kids and Community project of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPC) was a participatory research and community development project with low income families, Aboriginal families, families of diverse backgrounds, and families where a parent was Deaf or had a disability. The goal was to improve inclusion in early learning, healthy development and the transition to school. The project was undertaken with five other social planning councils in Ontario, and supported by Social Development Canada (Social Development Partnerships).

The project was led by a Parent Advisory Group comprised of parents who had experienced exclusion. The project built parent-community partnerships to encourage policy and program changes.

The project began with 23 focus groups with roughly 200 parents of young children who were from groups who had experienced exclusion. From the focus groups, participants defined inclusion and exclusion, highlighted what was working well, and identified key strategies for improvement

Base on the input from the focus groups, the Parent Advisory Group developed an action plan to address the most important barriers to inclusion. The action plan had five key themes:

- Addressing fees and affordability (for school and recreation)
- Best practices for promoting respect and safety
- Supporting parent participation and decision making in school structures
- Strategizing on transportation barriers
- Improving access to information

The action plan included:

- supporting the capacity of parents from groups most likely to face exclusion;
- addressing barriers which create exclusion; and
- developing inclusive policy and practices.

The project was very successful. The Parent Advisory Group (PAG) remained the decision making body throughout, and was recognized in the community for their insight and leadership on the project. Research participants were able to frame

the understanding of the issues, rather than having the definitions imposed from elsewhere. In addition, the project was successful in making concrete changes related to most of the key themes.

The PAG hosted a full day forum to address the school fees challenge. This led to the creation of an information sheet for parents on school fees available in six languages, and widely distributed through Ottawa and even beyond; several schools and school Boards revising their policies and practices with respect to school fees to be more inclusive; the Provincial government including in its' Poverty Reduction policy the need for all school boards to create inclusive policies with respect to school fees, and an agency collaboration to increase the availability of charitable school supplies for low income families.

A summary of the findings from the focus groups, and related information on inclusion and exclusion of families with young children in the Ottawa area is found in the report *Is Everybody Here? Inclusion and Exclusion of Families with Young Children in the Ottawa Area*

The PAG hosted a very successful capacity building forum for immigrant families with young children and small ethnocultural groups working with families, on the topic of inclusion and the school system. Almost 100 people participated and developed connections to support them in advocating for greater inclusion.

The PAG researched and developed a resource manual for parents, listing good examples of inclusion strategies to share with school and community organizations, strategies they could implement themselves as parents, without funding. The information has been published in *Good Examples: A Resource Manual for Parents of Young Children*.

Key elements in the success of the project were the strong leadership provided by the PAG and their ability to identify general dynamics of exclusion as well as the distinctness experienced by different groups and individuals, and the provision of supports such as childcare, nutritious refreshments, materials in multiple languages, transportation etc., to facilitate participation..

For more information, visit our website at  
[www.spcottawa.on.ca/AboutSPC\\_CurrentActivities.htm](http://www.spcottawa.on.ca/AboutSPC_CurrentActivities.htm)

**The Saskatchewan Intercultural Association (SIA):<sup>62</sup>**  
***SIA Poverty Forum, November, 2008***

In 2008, the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association (SIA) hosted an event in Saskatoon Saskatchewan, which examined the links between poverty and racism. The project was established in support and in partnership with the United Nations efforts to eradicate poverty around the world. The event focussed on the *International Human Rights Code*, to show how poverty and racism violate the code.

The event consisted of a tribunal, followed by focus groups to explore the issues in more depth. The tribunal involved testimonies from people with low incomes, who shared their experiences of racism, discrimination and other difficulties linked with poverty.

The focus groups which followed, discussed the truths about racism and poverty as well as steps that could be taken by communities, leaders and government at the local, national and international levels, to help eradicate the problem.

Focus group participants responded to eight questions:

1. *What are the major contributing factors to poverty?*

Here are a couple of the factors mentioned:

- There is a lack of affordable housing and childcare and some people of colour have experienced discrimination from landlords, making it difficult to rent housing.
- Many people of colour experience discrimination from employers in job interviews because of their ethnicity, making it more difficult to obtain employment.

2. *Has economic globalization decreased or increased poverty?*

Here are couple of the issues raised:

- Participants felt that in some ways globalization has increased poverty and in other ways it has decreased it.
- In the North American context, many North American employees are losing their jobs or experiencing less job security because many jobs are being outsourced to other countries where manufacturing costs are lower.
- Participants pointed out that globalization for some countries, has meant an increase in new job opportunities.

3. *Female headed households have been on the increase and according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), one third of all households are now headed by women. What are the consequences of these trends?*

Here are a couple of the issues raised:

- Concerns were expressed about the wage gap between men and women and also the higher risk for sole support mothers to fall into poverty, compared to sole support fathers.
- It is often difficult for sole support mothers to find permanent full-time work.

4. *How has HIV/AIDS and other health related problems impacted on women's lives and compounded their poverty?*

Here are a couple of the issues raised:

- Women all over the world are becoming at more risk of contracting HIV. It was felt by participants that inequality was the main cause of the trend.
- In some countries, women are subjected to unfair legal standards and do not have the power to control their sexual activities, making it difficult to practice safer sex.

5. *What structural/systemic barriers currently exist that exacerbate intergenerational cycles of poverty and racism?*

Here are a couple of the issues raised:

- Participants felt that a possible underlying cause of poverty is lack of education. Post secondary education is more likely to lead to a higher paying career but many cannot afford it. Student loans are available for some but they lead people into debt and are thus not the best option for everyone.
- Children who grow up in ghettoized communities are more likely to experience difficult circumstances because of the higher prevalence of drugs and criminal activity.

6. *What types of education/awareness raising strategies are needed to make a difference?*

Here are a couple of the suggestions made:

- Increased education for the public and for those experiencing poverty and racism.
- Need for teaching and encouraging cultural pride to young Aboriginal people and to immigrants, starting at the elementary school level.

7. *What can we do as a community to make a difference in terms of alleviating poverty?*

Here are a couple of the suggestions made:

- Large issues could be broken down into smaller more realistic goals.
- Creating coalitions aimed at achieving particular goals could be helpful. Strategies could be developed to engage the public and to work with the government to make poverty a priority.

8. *What can be done to alleviate or combat underlying causes of poverty and racism?*

Here are a couple of the suggestions made:

- Government action is very important.



- All levels of government-local, provincial and federal can take a leadership role and create the necessary infrastructure and institutions targeted at alleviating poverty.

From these discussions a set of 4 recommendations were made with respect to combating poverty and racism:

1. *Greater emphasis on education for young people, and awareness for the broader community.*
2. *Increased government funding and more government involvement in programs and services that aim to alleviate poverty and racism.*
3. *More adequate and affordable housing and daycare.*
4. *Greater emphasis and strict enforcement of gender equality.*

### **Community education activities for exploring intersectionality**

The following tools can be used to generate discussion about intersectionality. There are lots of fun and interactive ways to explore this concept. This section will look at three different activities that you can facilitate within your organization or with other organizations or groups as community education tools. Two of the activities are typically used as ice-breakers and the third activity is a more in-depth, self reflection activity.

#### **Intersectionality String Game**

This game works well as an ice-breaker, although a participant in one of our intersectionality workshops facilitated the game with a group of people as a more in depth activity, where participants talked about their experience with exclusion.

#### **Materials:**

A ball of string/yarn and enough people to make it work (5 and up would probably work best).

#### **Length of the Activity:**

The more people you have, the longer it will take. If you are looking for a quick ice-breaker, it will probably take about 10 minutes or so but you may want to be flexible with the time if people are taking a bit longer.

#### **How it works:**

1. Have participants gather in a circle.
2. Show participants the ball of yarn/string and explain to them that everyone, including you, will be sharing something about themselves to see how each person is connected. You will be exploring people's similarities and differences.
3. To get started, tell people that you will begin saying things about yourself. Explain to people that once you start talking, if someone hears you say something that she/he has in common with you, then that person should

interrupt your dialogue and take over where you left off. For example, if you both have kids or if you share a hobby in common.

4. Begin talking about yourself. Here is an example of something a person might say: *My name is ..... and I recently graduated with a degree in Social Work. I am a single mom with one daughter who is 5 years old. I was born in Toronto and I moved to Ottawa when I was 10 years old. I have been living here ever since. I love going to movies...* You can choose what kinds of things you would like to tell people about yourself. This is just one example.
5. Once someone starts to elaborate on what they have in common with you, hold on to a piece of the string with one hand and toss the rest of the ball to that person.
6. Each time a new person has something in common with the current person speaking, the ball of yarn should be tossed to that person. No one should be letting go of her/his little piece of the string.
7. Once every single person is holding a piece of string, you can stop the game. You may want to instruct people not to talk, once they have had their turn. That way everyone will get a piece of string faster.
8. While people are still holding on to the string, you can point out how complex and interwoven people's experiences are. Point out the complex weave of string and how it intersects at different points.

People are complex. We all have similarities and differences. We all have identities and experience that interact and make us who we are. You can draw attention to the various intersections of the string. This can then lead the group into a discussion about what intersectionality is.

### **How Many of You.....exploring our own oppressions**

***Materials:***

Enough people to make it work (5 and up would probably work best).

***Length of the Activity:***

Generally speaking, this activity takes 5 minutes or less.

***How it Works:***

1. Explain to participants that they will be taking a moment to reflect on their own experience of exclusion and discrimination. Tell the group that you will be naming different kinds of discrimination and asking participants to respond in various ways to them. Reinforce that it is impossible to name every single type of discrimination and that you apologize if something gets left out. Assure the group that you will give them a chance afterwards to let you know if you missed anything big. Also, it is important to mention to participants that they do not have to reveal everything about themselves and that it is their choice whether or not to respond to something. Participants do not have to participate in an action that would reveal an

aspect of their identity or experience that they are not comfortable sharing with everyone.

2. Start the game by naming a type of discrimination and pairing it with an action. For example, you might say—"If you have ever experienced oppression or discrimination because of your gender, I want you to clap your hands. Don't stop clapping until the game is over."
3. Once people start clapping, name another kind of discrimination and pair it with a different action. You might say "If you have ever experienced racism, I want you to stomp your left foot. If you are also clapping, don't stop. Some of you may now be clapping and stomping."
4. Name another kind of discrimination and pair it with a different action. You might say "If you have ever experienced discrimination because of a disability, I want you to stomp your right foot."
5. The game can continue in this fashion. You may want to have participants shout or scream in the end, to let out some frustration. Keep in mind that you will be limited in terms of how many different combinations of actions people can do. Also, keep in mind your audience. If someone does not have control over their leg movements, they won't be able to stomp their feet, for example.
6. The goal of this activity is to get people thinking about the cumulative impact of multiple discriminations/oppressions.

### **Invisible Backpack of Privilege Activity**

This activity has been adapted from a concept developed by Peggy McIntosh. Peggy McIntosh is a white feminist activist, who explored and wrote about her own privilege as a white person in a paper entitled "*White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies.*"<sup>63</sup> Her idea was that often times, society refers to how people are disadvantaged but does not often discuss how people are advantaged and have invisible privileges based on their status, gender, race, and in other ways as well.

This activity has been re-created many times by different facilitators and we encourage you to adapt it for your own organization/group.

#### **Materials:**

Index cards with individual privilege statements written on each one, a knapsack (optional) and enough people to make it work (5 and up would probably work best).

#### **Length of the Activity:**

Generally speaking, this activity takes 30 minutes or more, depending on how in depth participants are able and willing to go and how much time you have.

#### **How it Works:**

1. Distribute the index cards. If you have a larger group, you may give one card to each person. If you have a smaller group, you may decide to give

- each person 2 or 3 cards. If you have a knapsack, have people draw a card or two from the knapsack, instead of passing them out.
2. Explain that this activity is designed to give people an opportunity to reflect on their own power and privilege and also discuss the concepts as a larger group.
  3. Instruct participants to read their statement and to spend a minute reflecting on what it means to them. Tell the group that after they reflect on the statement they will take turns commenting on them. Let people know that there are no right or wrong answers but that you are willing to comment on your card first to provide an example.
  4. Once people have had a chance to read and reflect on their statement(s), begin the activity by commenting on your own card. You can choose to reflect on how the statement relates to your own power and privilege or how it relates to power and privilege in general. Give participants a chance to reply or respond to your reflection. Each statement will have more or less relevance for certain group members, depending on their own personal experiences and histories.
  5. After the group has talked about your statement, have each participant take a turn reading and commenting on their own statement, until each statement has been read and commented on.
  6. After all the statements have been read, you may want to spend some time debriefing. Often this activity can bring up strong emotions for people. Summarize the objective of the activity by pointing out that we can all experience privilege in certain ways but simultaneously experience oppression or discrimination in other ways. For example, a person may not experience sexism, but could experience racism or ableism.

***Sample Statements for index cards:***

The following are sample statements that were used for CRIAW's intersectionality workshops. You can use these, along with some of your own, or you can develop all of your own statements. These are just examples to help demonstrate the concept.

1. **If I move out of my current residence, I am fairly sure that I will be able to rent or purchase housing that I can afford & in a neighbourhood where I want to live.**
2. **I can go shopping, take public transit or carry out errands at any time of the day or night without fear of being followed or harassed.**
3. **I can hold my partner, boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse's hand in public without being harassed or looked at funny.**
4. **I can accept a job or contract without having people suspecting that I got that job because of an affirmative action program.**

5. I can carry out my daily routine without worrying whether the places I go will have wheelchair ramps or elevators.
6. I can talk about my job or work openly without fear of being judged or negatively labelled.
7. I can walk into a store, bank, restaurant or other establishment and communicate with people in my language of choice.
8. I can work in a job without being underestimated because of my age or perceived age.
9. People don't often ask me, "where are you from" or "what country are you from" without having prior knowledge of my citizenship status.
10. I can talk openly about my sexual orientation without fear of being judged by those around me.
11. I can comfortably use public washrooms that correspond with my gender.
12. People do not regularly talk excessively slowly or loudly to me.
13. I can be sure that my children will be exposed to a curriculum that testifies to the existence of their history, culture, language, etc.
14. I can go out in public without people looking at me like I am scary or out of place and/or avoiding me, for example, crossing to the other side of the street when they see me.

## **Resources**

The following list is designed to link you to current, quality online resources that compliment the content in this toolkit. There are links to useful websites, checklists and research that reflect intersectionality and some of its related principles i.e. diversity, inclusion, etc.

### **Accessibility resources**

1. Canadian Association of Community Living. *Building an Inclusive and Accessible Canada: Supporting people with disabilities*.  
<http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/actionplan/accessible-canada>  
Accessed: April 15, 2009

2. Cope, A. & Darke, J. (1999). *Trans Accessibility Project: Making Women's Shelters Accessible to Transgendered Women*.  
<http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights/tap/index.html>  
Accessed, April 15, 2009
3. DisAbled Women's Network Ontario (DAWN Ontario). *DAWN Ontario Access Checklist*. North Bay, Ontario  
[http://dawn.thot.net/access\\_checklist\\_full.html](http://dawn.thot.net/access_checklist_full.html)  
Accessed, April 15, 2009
4. Social Planning & Resource Council of BC  
Links to all kinds of accessibility resources-tips, tools pertaining to people with disabilities:  
<http://www.sparc.bc.ca/resources-and-publications/category/26/accessibilityresourcespublications>  
Accessed: April 15, 2009
5. The Conseil Communauté en Santé du Manitoba in partnership with The Disabilities Issues Office (2008). *Francophone full Citizenship: The voice of 51 Franco-Manitobans Report-Spring 2008*. Manitoba: Author.  
[http://www.gov.mb.ca/dio/pdf/francophone\\_fullcitizen.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/dio/pdf/francophone_fullcitizen.pdf)  
Accessed: April 15, 2009

#### **Resources relating to intersectionality**

1. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) (2004). *Intersectionality: A tool for gender and Economic Justice*. Toronto: AWID.  
<http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Intersectionality-A-Tool-for-Gender-and-Economic-Justice>  
Accessed April 15, 2009
2. Crenshaw, K. W. (1994). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, identity politics and Violence against women of colour, in M.A. Fineman, and R. Mykitiuk (eds.), *The Public Nature of Private Violence*. New York: Routledge.  
<http://www.wcsap.org/Events/Workshop07/mapping-margins.pdf>  
Accessed, April 15, 2009
3. Boodram, Chris (2003). *Building the Links: The Intersection of Race and Sexual Orientation*: Toronto: EGALE Canada  
<http://www.egale.ca/index.asp?lang=E&menu=40&item=819>  
Accessed, April 15, 2009

4. Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2001). *An Intersectional Approach to Discrimination: Addressing Multiple Grounds in Human Rights Claims. Discussion Paper, Policy and Education Branch*. Ontario: Ontario Human Rights Commission.  
[http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/discussion\\_consultation/DissIntersectionalityFtns/pdf](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/discussion_consultation/DissIntersectionalityFtns/pdf)  
Accessed, April 15, 2009
5. School Services and Staff Development, Peel District School Board (2002). *Issue Papers on the "Isms: Support Documents for the Implementation of the Future We Want*. Peel District School Board.  
[http://www.gobeyondwords.org/documents/IntersectionalityFullDiscussion\\_000\\_000.doc](http://www.gobeyondwords.org/documents/IntersectionalityFullDiscussion_000_000.doc)  
Accessed, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### **Research**

1. Blaney, E. (2004). *Probing Rural Issues-Selecting Methods to Address Abuse of Women and Girls: [E]valu[at]ing "Better" Practices and Reflexive Approaches*. Fredericton: Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research.  
[http://www.unbf.ca/arts/CFVR/documents/WomensStudies\\_PRISM\\_20043.pdf](http://www.unbf.ca/arts/CFVR/documents/WomensStudies_PRISM_20043.pdf)  
Accessed, April 15, 2009
2. Chan, Z., Grayer, B., Efting, J., Jones, H., Kaur, K. & Roberts, M. (2004). *Women in Transit: Organizing for Social Justice in Our Communities*. Vancouver: Bus Riders Union.  
<http://edocs.lib.sfu.ca/projects/chodarr/documents/chodarr0865.pdf>  
Accessed, April 15, 2009
3. Neal, R. (2004). *Voices: Women, Poverty and Homelessness in Canada*. Ottawa: National Anti-Poverty Association.  
<http://action.web.ca/home/narcc/attach/Women%2C%20Poverty%20and%20Homelessness%20in%20Canada.pdf>  
Accessed, April 15, 2009
4. First Nations Centre. (2007). *Considerations and Templates for Ethical Research Practices*. Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization  
[http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC\\_ConsiderationsandTemplatesInformationResource.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC_ConsiderationsandTemplatesInformationResource.pdf)  
Accessed, April 15, 2009

### **Resources relating to policy development**

1. Canadian Human Rights Commission. (2006).  
*A Place for All: A guide to Creating an inclusive workplace*  
<http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/pdf/publications/aplaceforall.pdf>  
Accessed, April 16, 2009.
2. Deborah B, CST Faculty Associate (2002-2005). *Voices of Diversity/Equity - Transforming University Curriculum. Core Newsletter, Volume 14 Number 1 (October 2004)*  
<https://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/core/article/view/2428/1633>  
Accessed, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### **Websites**

1. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)  
Web: <http://www.awid.org/>
2. Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW)  
Web: <http://criaw-icref.ca/>
3. Egale Canada  
Web: <http://www.egale.ca/index.asp>
4. Saskatchewan Intercultural Association  
Web: <http://www.siassoc.sk.ca/>
5. Social Planning Council of Ottawa  
Web: <http://www.spcottawa.on.ca/>
6. Social Planning Council of Winnipeg  
Web: <http://spcw.mb.ca>
7. Women's Health Research Network  
Web: <http://www.whrn.ca/index.html>

### **Glossary of terms**

The following are definitions for some of the terms that were used throughout the toolkit. Please note that the terms appear in alphabetical order.

#### **Aboriginal Peoples:**

*Under the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, the term Aboriginal Peoples refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people living in Canada. However, common use of the term is not always inclusive of all three distinct people and much of the*



*available research only focuses on particular segments of the aboriginal population*<sup>64</sup>.

**Accessibility:**

*Accessibility* means “providing access.”<sup>65</sup> “Access means, “freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something”.<sup>66</sup> As organizations, being accessible means that we structure our spaces in such a way that people can make use of our space, services, resources, etc.

**Colonization:**

This term refers to a series of events and conditions that occurred when white Europeans landed in North America and took control of the land. The following are a few examples of some of these events and conditions:

- First Nations, Metis and Inuit were taken from their lands, which led to cycles of poverty, displacement, instability and a loss of a way of life.
- *Indian Act* was passed, which made indigenous peoples wards of the state and completely changed the social, political and economic systems that were in place before.
- First Nations and Inuit spiritual practices were criminalized and replaced with Christianity.
- Residential schools were established, whereby children were ripped from their homes and brought to schools where they were beaten for speaking their languages and many ensued years of sexual, physical and emotional abuse. The last residential school did not close until the 1980’s<sup>67</sup>

**Community Development:**

*The planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being (economic, social, environmental and cultural). It is a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.*<sup>68</sup>

**Disability:**

*The social construction of disability assesses and deals with disability from an able bodied perspective. It includes erroneous assumptions about capacity to perform that come from an able bodied frame of reference. It encompasses the failure to make possible or accept different ways of doing things.*<sup>69</sup> Often times, disability is defined very rigidly and only makes note of physical disabilities; however, disability includes more than just physical disabilities. DAWN Ontario puts it: “For those of us whose lives have not been touched by disability, it is easy to think of disabilities as being the obvious ones: lack of sight, lack of hearing, lack of mobility (being in a wheelchair), and intellectual disabilities. But there are just as many “invisible” disabilities as there are visible ones. These include mental and emotional illnesses and chronic illnesses such as chronic fatigue, epilepsy, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, fibromyalgia, learning disabilities, environmental allergies, and others.”<sup>70</sup>

**Discrimination:**

People can experience discrimination in many different ways, which are not always obvious. Often discrimination is systemic, which means it is built in to the structures of our society. People can experience discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, language, country of origin, sexual orientation, ability, geographic location, Aboriginal identity, among many others. This is by no means an exhaustive list. Many people experience multiple discrimination in their lives.

**Diversity:**

*A term used to encompass all the various differences among people including race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status, etc. and commonly used in the United States and increasingly in Canada to describe workplace programs aimed at reducing discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and outcome for all groups. Concern has been expressed by anti-racism and race relations practitioners that diversity programs may water down efforts to combat racism in all its forms.*<sup>71</sup>

**Equality:**

As with many of the terms listed in this glossary, the term equality does not have one solid, correct definition. In its broadest sense, equality is about creating a society where everyone is treated fairly and equally, regardless of whom they are or where they live. There are also specific types of equality, such as gender equality (equality amongst all genders) or economic equality (promoting sustainable incomes). The following is a definition of equality from the Disabled Women's Network of Ontario (DAWN Ontario): "The feminist principle of equality and inclusion means, as feminist organizations, we apply a feminist analysis to policies, programs, practices, services and legislation to ensure they are inclusive of women and other marginalized groups. We advocate for equity practices to eliminate the barriers to inclusion, recognizing that inclusion leads to equality."<sup>72</sup>

**Equity:**

The following refers to employment equity: *A program designed to remove barriers to equality in employment by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices, remedying the effects of past discrimination, and ensuring appropriate representation of the designated groups.*<sup>73</sup>

**Ethnicity:**

*The multiplicity of beliefs, behaviours and traditions held in common by a group of people bound by particular linguistic, historical, geographical, religious and/or racial homogeneity. Ethnic diversity is the variation of such groups and the presence of a number of ethnic groups within one society or nation. The word "ethnic" is often used to denote non-dominant or less powerful cultural identities in Canada.*<sup>74</sup>

**Exclusion:**

There are many different ways to define exclusion. The following is a definition from the Social Planning Council of Ottawa: *We define exclusion as a dynamic,*

*complex, and multi-dimensional process as a result of which certain groups find themselves on the margins of society. This is demonstrated by outcomes of lower economic status, combined with a lack of power to change these outcomes. Exclusion is a process and an outcome. It is experienced at both the individual and community level. Conversely, social inclusion assures each citizen that he or she will be provided with the opportunity to fully participate in realizing aspirations. Social inclusion relies on active civil participation to identify barriers to access and to ensure that people have a collective sense of belonging to their society.*<sup>75</sup>

**First Nations People:**

*Many people prefer to be called First Nations or First Nations People instead of Indians. The term is not a synonym for Aboriginal Peoples because it doesn't include Inuit or Métis. The term First Nations People generally applies to both Status and Non-Status Indians.*<sup>76</sup>

**Gender:**

The societal roles and behaviours that are assigned to males and females at birth. Usually a person's gender is assigned, based on their genitals and biological sex. Sometimes people identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, whereas others do not.

**Globalization:**

*Globalization can be seen as a set of processes which in part facilitate the easier flow of materials, products, services, cultural symbols and practices and communication between groups of people, communities and nations. While on the one hand these processes bring people closer together, their speed and intensity also create problems. For instance, trade is emphasized within globalization, as the way in which people's lives all over the world will be improved.*<sup>77</sup> *While trade is pushed, the social safety net provided by the government is also eroded*<sup>78</sup>.

**Homophobia:**

*An irrational fear and/or hatred of same-sex attractions can be expressed through prejudice, discrimination, harassment or acts of violence (known as "bashing")*<sup>79</sup>

**Immigrant:**

*An immigrant is someone who moves to Canada intending to stay permanently (and have been granted the right to live in the country permanently by Canada as landed immigrants). Immigrants come from all over the world: Asia, Africa, Europe, North or South America, or Oceania.*<sup>80</sup>

**Inclusion:**

The basic definition of inclusion means to include or involve. Inclusion is defined differently by different individuals and groups. Here is one such definition for social inclusion: "Social inclusion assures each citizen that they will be provided with the opportunity to fully participate in realizing their aspirations. It implies that

the state is prepared to assume responsibility for addressing barriers to that full participation. Social inclusion relies on active civic participation to identify the barriers to access and to ensure that people have a collective sense of belonging to their society.”<sup>81</sup>

**Intersectional Feminist Frameworks:**

*Intersectional Feminist Frameworks attempt to understand how multiple forces work together and interact to reinforce conditions of inequality and social exclusion*<sup>82</sup>.

**Intersectionality:**

*Intersectionality is a tool for analysis, advocacy and policy development that addresses multiple discriminations and helps us understand how different sets of identities impact on access to rights and opportunities.*<sup>83</sup>

**Inuit:**

“Inuit are the Aboriginal People of Arctic Canada. Inuit live primarily in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and northern parts of Quebec and throughout most of Labrador.”<sup>84</sup> “The word Inuit means “the people” in Inuktitut and is the term by which Inuit refer to themselves.”<sup>85</sup>

**Marginalization:**

“[...] the process of being “left out” of or silenced in a social group.”<sup>86</sup> A person or people can be left out because of their race, gender, class, geographic location, age, HIV status, disability, ethnicity, immigrant status, refugee status, amongst many others reasons. These are just a few examples.

**Métis:**

*The word Métis is French for “Mixed Blood.” [...] Historically, the term Métis applied to the children of French Fur Traders and Cree women in the Prairies, of English and Scottish traders and Dene women in the North and Inuit and British in Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, the term is used broadly to describe people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis.*<sup>87</sup>

**People of Colour:**

*A term which applies to all people who are not seen as White by the dominant group, generally used by racialized groups as an alternative to the term visible minority. It emphasizes that skin colour is a key consideration in the “everyday” experiences of their lives. The term is an attempt to describe people with a more positive term than non-White or minority which frames them in the context of the dominant group*<sup>88</sup>. However, people of colour can be invisible as well, if their skin colour is more light than others.

**Racialized:**

*This word has been used in different ways by different people .In CRIAW’s Fact Sheet on Women’s Experience of Racism, the term racialized was used to refer*

*to anyone who experiences racism because of their race, skin colour, ethnic background, accent, culture or religion, which includes people of colour, Aboriginal peoples, and ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural minorities who are targets of racism.<sup>89</sup>*

**Racism:**

Racism can be overt, subtle or structural. Overt racism can involve beating people up, calling people names or excluding people because of their race or ethnicity. Subtle racism involves identifying someone primarily on their race or ethnicity instead of by their personality or achievements. Structural Racism refers to the racism that is a part of every aspect of society. It comes in many forms but a common example is the way that many companies and organizations conduct their hiring processes. For instance, often times when the decision makers are white men, they tend to hire other white men.<sup>90</sup>

**Refugee:**

*A refugee is someone who moves to Canada under a special category ("refugee") because they are fleeing persecution or war in their own country.<sup>91</sup>*

**Sexism:**

Discrimination or mistreatment based on a person's sex. Historically, women have faced systemic and overt sex discrimination, often based on rigid ideas of male and female gender roles. Many women who face sex discrimination also face other kinds of discrimination as well such as ableism, racism, etc., which cause even greater degrees of exclusion.

**Sexual Orientation:**

This is a term that refers to whom we are sexually or romantically attracted to. People can be attracted to those of the opposite sex (straight,), those of the same sex (lesbian, gay), or to those of both sexes (bisexual). Sexual Orientation is different from gender identity, which refers to whether a person identifies as a man, woman, both or neither.

**Social Justice:**

There are many different ways that social justice has been defined. The following definition seemed to be the most fitting for this resource: "[...] equal participation in a democratic society, which allows for equal (and fair) distribution of resources to all its members, who have a degree of self-determination & interdependence."<sup>92</sup>

**Tokenism:**

Tokenism is when a person is seen or expected to represent an entire group of people. For example a lesbian woman may be expected to speak on behalf of all lesbian women, or an African American woman expected to speak on behalf of all African American women. As a participant in one of our intersectionality workshops pointed out however, sometimes tokenism is more complicated than this and people can become *pigeon holed*. For instance, often people make the

assumption that immigrants to Canada are only interested in immigration issues. Moreover, sometimes people are hired to fill positions, with or without the conscious intent of having token representation from certain groups.

**Transgendered (or trans):**

*An umbrella term that includes people who do not fit traditional male or female roles and expectations, and/or who identify with a gender other than the one assigned at birth (For Example, women who (identify) as men, or men who (identify) as women). Transgender does not imply any specific form of sexual orientation. Individuals in the transgender community express themselves in different ways. This can include adopting the clothing and/or behaviours of the opposite or both genders, use of hormones and/or gender reassignment surgery.<sup>93</sup>*

**Two-Spirited:**

*The term Two Spirit is used to describe gender and sexual diversity among Aboriginal cultures. It was adopted around 1990 by Aboriginal gays and lesbians who chose to affirm their spiritual, cultural, and social rights within their communities, and to make themselves distinct within the queer community<sup>94</sup>.*

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Morris, M. & Bunjun, B. (2007). *Using Intersectional Feminist Frameworks in Research: A resource for embracing the complexities of women's live*. Ottawa: CRIAW. p. 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge. pp. 14-15.
- <sup>3</sup> Crenshaw, K. W. (1994). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, identity politics and Violence against women of colour. In M.A. Fineman, and R. Mykitiuk (eds.). *The Public Nature of Private Violence*. New York: Routledge. <http://www.wcsap.org/Events/Workshop07/mapping-margins.pdf> Accessed May 20, 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2008). *An Overview of Traditional Knowledge and Medicine and Public Health in Canada*. Ottawa: Author, P. 3. <http://www.naho.ca/publications/tkOverviewPublicHealth.pdf> Accessed, April 22, 2009.
- <sup>5</sup> Lorde, A. (2007). *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde*. Toronto: Crossing Press. p. 114.
- <sup>6</sup> Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) (2004). *Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice*. Toronto: AWID. p. 2. <http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Intersectionality-A-tool-for-Gender-and-Economic-Justice2> Accessed, April 22, 2009.
- <sup>7</sup> Morris, M. & Bunjun, B. (2007). *Using Intersectional Feminist Frameworks in Research: A resource for embracing the complexities of women's live*. Ottawa: CRIAW. p. 18.
- <sup>8</sup> Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) (2006). *Intersectional Feminist Frameworks: An Emerging Vision*. Ottawa: Author. p. 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. (2006 Census). *Median earnings of recent immigrants and Canadian-born earners, both sexes, aged 25 to 54, with or without university degree, 2005, for Canada, provinces and territories – 20% sample data*. Ottawa, ON: Queen's Printers. <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/highlights/earnings/Table802.cfm?GH=4&Lang=E&O=A&SC=13&SO=99&T=802> Accessed, April 22, 2009.
- <sup>10</sup> Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) (2004). *Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice*. Toronto: AWID. p. 5. <http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Intersectionality-A-tool-for-Gender-and-Economic-Justice2> Accessed, April 22, 2009.
- <sup>11</sup> Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) (2006). *Intersectional Feminist Frameworks: An Emerging Vision*. Ottawa: Author. p. 11.
- <sup>12</sup> Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) (2006). *Intersectional Feminist Frameworks: An Emerging Vision*. Ottawa: Author. p. 9.
- <sup>13</sup> Information about the Anti-racism conference came from the CRIAW Board meeting minutes from June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1992.
- <sup>14</sup> Integrated Feminist Analysis was one of the terms CRIAW used at the time prior to using the term intersectional feminist frameworks. Both terms refer to the same meaning.

<sup>15</sup> This quote came from the minutes of CRIAW's Annual General Meeting in November of 2004 under # 7. *Message from incoming President-Jo-Anne Lee.*

<sup>16</sup> Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/accessibility> Accessed, April 23, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/access>.

<sup>18</sup> Environics Research Group (2004). Canadian Attitudes Towards Disability Issues as cited in: Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (2005). *Did You Know? Issue # 1: Cultural Rights of Persons with Disabilities.*

[http://www.ilcanada.ca/upload/documents/FactSheet\\_Cultural.pdf](http://www.ilcanada.ca/upload/documents/FactSheet_Cultural.pdf)  
Accessed, April 23, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Council of Canadians with Disabilities (2004). *Building an Inclusive and Accessible Canada: Supporting People with Disabilities.*

<http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/actionplan/accessible-canada>  
Accessed, April 23, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO) (2006). *Living in Ottawa with a Disability.* Ottawa: SPCO. pp. 10-11.

<sup>21</sup> Kingston Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Pride Month Pullout, Progressive Independent Community Press (PIC Press). Page 17, June, 1998. E. MacDonald & T. VanVierzen, In *Definitions and Myths.* Human Rights Office, Queens University. [http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights/tgts/tgts\\_myths.htm#whatisit](http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights/tgts/tgts_myths.htm#whatisit) Accessed, April 23, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Cope, A. & Darke, J. (1999). *Trans Accessibility Project: Making Women's Shelters Accessible to Transgendered Women.* <http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights/tap/index.html> Accessed, April 23, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Canadian Human Rights Commission. (2006). *A Place for All: A guide to Creating an inclusive workplace.* p. 2. <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/pdf/publications/aplaceforall.pdf> Accessed, April 23, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Egale Canada (2003). *Egale Intersections Committee.* <http://www.egale.ca/index.asp?lang=E&menu=40&item=304> Accessed June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Frank, F. & Smith, A. (1999). *The Community Development Handbook: A Tool to Build Community Capacity.* Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada. p. 24. [http://www1.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/sid/cia/comm\\_deve/handbook.shtml](http://www1.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/sid/cia/comm_deve/handbook.shtml) Accessed, April 23, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>27</sup> Morris, M. & Bunjun, B. (2007). *Using Intersectional Feminist Frameworks in Research: A resource for embracing the complexities of women's lives.* Ottawa: CRIAW. p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>29</sup> Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) (2004). *Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice.* Toronto: AWID. p. 5. <http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Intersectionality-A-tool-for-Gender-and-Economic-Justice2> Accessed, April 22, 2009.



<sup>30</sup> Frank, F. & Smith, A. (1999). *The Community Development Handbook: A Tool to Build Community Capacity*. Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada. p. 97. [http://www1.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/sid/cia/comm\\_deve/handbook.shtml](http://www1.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/sid/cia/comm_deve/handbook.shtml) Accessed, April 23, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>38</sup> Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) (2004). *Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice*. Toronto: AWID. p. 5. <http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Intersectionality-A-tool-for-Gender-and-Economic-Justice2> Accessed, April 22, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Morris, M. & Bunjun, B. (2007). *Using Intersectional Feminist Frameworks in Research: A resource for embracing the complexities of women's live*. Ottawa: CRIAW. p. 22.

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INTERSECTIONAL  
FEMINIST  
FRAMEWORKS

*An Emerging Vision*



CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN



The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) is a research institute that provides tools and research to organizations taking action to advance social justice and equality for all women. CRIAW recognizes women's diverse experiences and perspectives, creates spaces for developing women's knowledge, bridges regional isolation, and provides communication links among researchers and organizations actively working to promote social justice and women's equality.

Through a new strategic focus, Women's Economic and Social Justice: Overcoming Poverty and Exclusion (2004-2008), CRIAW has been in the process of exploring the application of alternative feminist theories and practices to its social and economic justice work towards equality for all women. Intersectional Feminist Frameworks is our new emerging vision. In our upcoming work, we will be focusing on alternative approaches to women's social and economic justice.

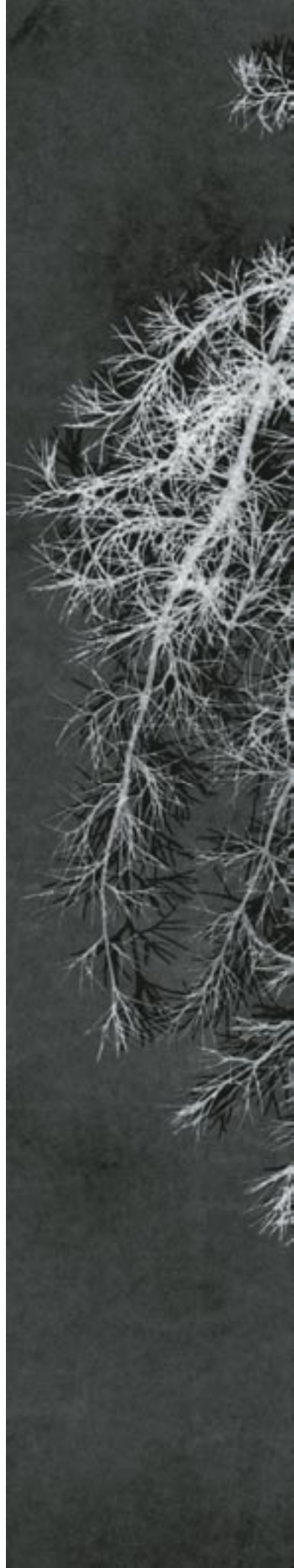
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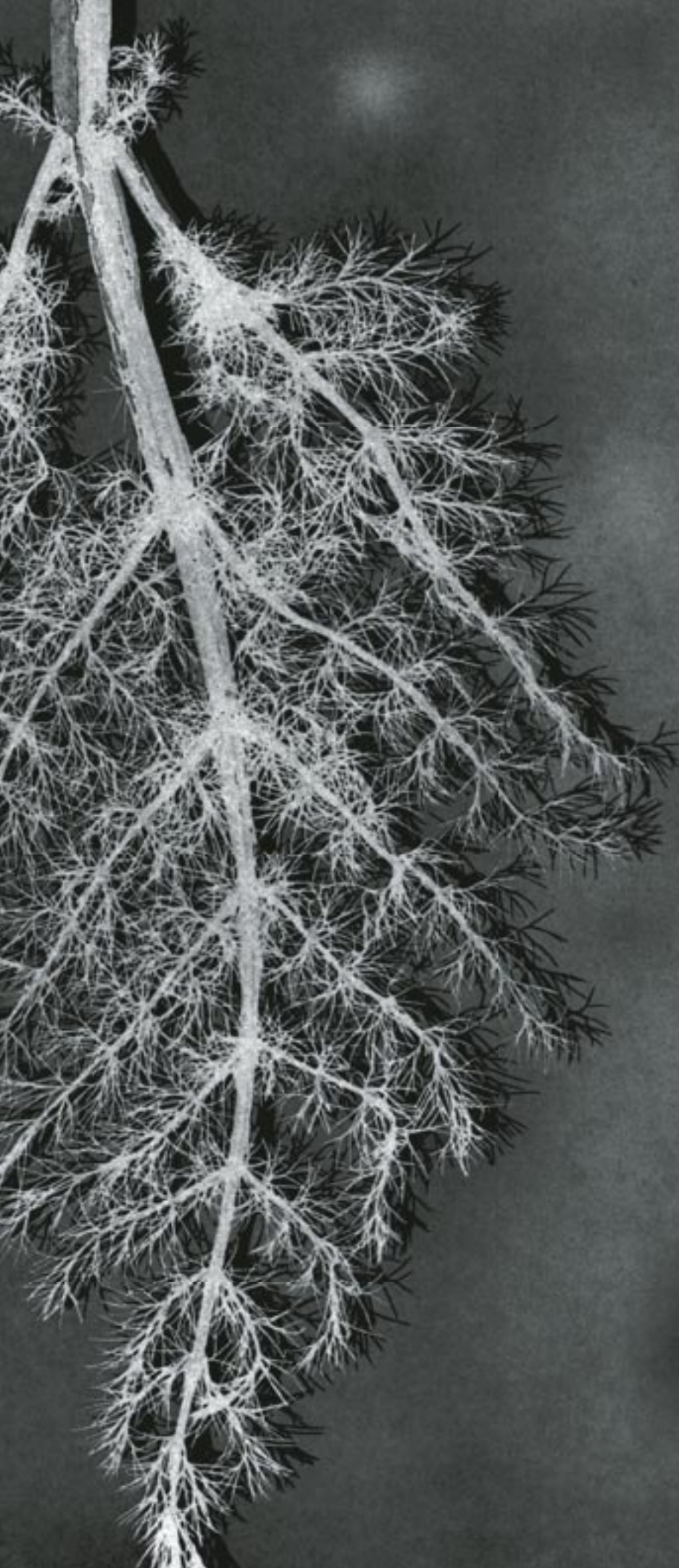
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Cette publication paraît aussi en français sous le titre: "Les cadres d'analyse féministe intersectionnelle: une vision émergente".







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## AN EMERGING VISION

How, in a country which boasts eight consecutive years of budget surpluses have Canadians allowed poverty to persist and grow? Among those most affected are women and children. *One in seven (2.4 million) women are now living in poverty;*<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal women, lone mothers, senior women, women with disabilities and racialized and immigrant women are disproportionately represented among the poor.

Why have the efforts of groups working towards social justice and the elimination of poverty and social exclusion been slow to create systemic change? Despite the efforts of many committed Canadians and years of debate and various initiatives by governments, we seem to have made little headway. In fact, poverty has intensified for marginalized groups.

One challenge that feminist and social justice advocates face is that our approaches have not kept pace with the growing complexity of contemporary social, political, economic and cultural conditions.

Based on our work in women's movements, CRIAW believes that different and diverse approaches are urgently needed in struggles for social and economic justice. Accordingly, in the last two years, CRIAW has begun developing intersectional feminist frameworks (IFFs).

This critical reflection piece introduces and explores CRIAW's emerging thinking around the contributions of IFFs to alternative approaches to re-envisioning policy change and advocacy. It aims to facilitate a deeper understanding within women's and social justice organizations of IFFs, which can contribute towards a more just world for all citizens.

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## Why IFFs?

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CRIAW has, for some years now, been engaged in a process of reconsidering mainstream approaches to questions of social and economic justice, particularly the ways in which feminist lenses are applied to government policies. One case in point is gender-based analysis (GBA). Over the last ten years, the Canadian government and many women's and social justice organizations have adopted GBA to address the differential impact of policies and programs on women and men.

and globalization to *simultaneously* determine inequalities among individuals and groups.

As an emerging vision, IFFs have the potential to open new spaces for transformation by examining not only the complex factors operating in women's and men's lives that keep them marginalized, but also how they are often able to respond to those forces in creative and innovative ways that ensure their survival and allow them to live their lives with some measure of dignity. IFFs seek to validate and acknowledge

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*IFFs attempt to understand how multiple forces work together and interact to reinforce conditions of inequality and social exclusion.*

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While GBA has brought greater awareness of women's inequality relative to men, a "gender only" lens that primarily looks at differential gender impacts or discrimination between women and men fails to account for the complexity of women's lives. Prioritizing one identity entry point (i.e. gender) or one relation of power (i.e. patriarchy<sup>2</sup>) to the exclusion of others (i.e. race, class) misrepresents the full diversity of women's lived realities.

the efforts of marginalized women and men to bring about change.

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## **IFFs: Emerging Approaches and Principles**

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CRIAW's evolving work on developing IFFs is grounded in conversations representing many different views. While there are differences among them, common themes underlying IFFs include:

IFFs attempt to understand how multiple forces work together and interact to reinforce conditions of inequality and social exclusion. IFFs examine how factors including socio-economic status, race, class, gender, sexualities, ability, geographic location, refugee and immigrant status combine with broader historical and current systems of discrimination such as colonialism

- Employing multi-pronged, multi-dimensional analyses;
- Centering policy analyses on the lives of those most marginalized;
- Refusing to think within policy divides that do not comprehend women's lives in holistic ways and keep women alienated;

- Acknowledging that power relations shape feminist and social justice politics and research. Feminist and social justice organizations are also embedded in relations of power and privilege so that it is necessary to always remain self-reflective about our own positioning in relations of power;
- Validating alternative world views and knowledge that have historically been marginalized;
- Understanding that varying groups of women experience diverse histories that position them differently in hierarchical social relations of power and give rise to different social identities;
- Challenging binary thinking (i.e. able/disabled; gay/straight; white/black; man/woman; West/East; North/South) taken as definitive; and
- Revealing how such conceptual limitations are both the outcome of and foster, social rankings and unequal power relations.<sup>3</sup>



**Given these common themes, it is possible to identify that on principle, IFFs are:**

- Fluid, changing, and negotiated rather than fixed, inherent or absolute;
- Historically, politically, geographically, ecologically, and culturally specific and interactive;
- Locational, situational and particular rather than universal; and

- Diverse rather than singular in their approach to issues (multiple entry points rather than one).



In the processes of engaging with IFFs, CRIAW strongly believes in the transformative and analytical potential of IFFs in effecting social change. **Thus, this critical reflection piece lays out our emerging vision of IFFs so that it can be used by women’s and social justice organizations to reflect upon, analyze, and transform:**

- The development, content, and delivery of programming activities, such as workshops, conferences, forums, and seminars;
- The analysis, design of and recommendations for public policies, such as immigration or welfare policies; and
- The internal policies and ethics of social justice organizations.

# WHY IFFs AT THIS HISTORICAL MOMENT?



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## Internationally

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The concept of the intersectionality of different grounds of oppression is not new; it emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in a variety of contexts. In the United States and Canada, it grew out of the inadequacies of the mainstream feminist movement to address the issues, concerns and struggles of racialized women.

Over the past four decades, the many United Nations sponsored conferences on women have provided significant opportunities for women from different countries, classes, races, sexualities and nationalities to come together to debate and articulate visions for gender equality and alternatives to mainstream approaches. Most recently, intersectional analysis arose within the context of the Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. With the tremendous contributions of women from the 'global South' and Indigenous and racialized women within the 'global North,' the issues, diversity

and multiplicity of feminism are brought to the forefront, in particular the intersectionality of gender with sexuality, class and race.

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## In Canada

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The relevance of advancing alternative intersectional frameworks for women's equality can be attributed to several interrelated factors. Foremost in driving this initiative are the diverse voices of women in contemporary Canadian women's movements. Today's women's movements are increasingly diverse, consisting of many voices, representing many different sectors of society. No longer can socially-dominant groups assume that their identities and interests are representative of all women.

The history of women's movements in Canada has been one of change. Second wave feminists put the issue of gender equality on Canada's political agenda, making considerable gains

through their struggles. They demanded full inclusion in citizenship, the right to participate in the public sphere, and the right to share equally in the resources of the state. GBA was one major outcome of this movement.

Governments and non-governmental organizations slowly began implementing GBA in response to second wave feminist activism and international human rights lobbying. GBA developed out of what is now an out-dated traditional liberal feminist definition of gender: the universal categorization of “women” as one discrete group in opposition to “men” based primarily on biological differences. In this definition, women are one coherent group without differences based on race, ability, sexuality, class or other factors.

many women continue to feel unrepresented or misrepresented as most government policies still prioritize a male/female analysis, with little space for any other categorization or self-identification.

Overall, second wave feminism left many women behind. Throughout the second wave, minority women’s movements challenged the assumption that white middle class women could make claims to represent all women when many were unable to identify with this homogenous definition. These feminists argued that marginalized women had rights to represent themselves based on their particular knowledge and lived experiences. Race, ethnicity, sexualities, class or country of origin may be equally if not more important to how women experience their lives and to how society defines them.

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*CRIAW sees gender as only one relationship of power. Using IFFs, social categories such as race, class, gender, sexualities, abilities, citizenship, and Aboriginality among others, operate relationally; these categories do not stand on their own, but rather gain meaning and power by reinforcing and referencing each other.*

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GBA has been important in mainstreaming a gender-sensitive perspective into the work of governmental and non-profit organizations. Recently, there has been a move within GBA to incorporate a diversity lens, without fully incorporating more recent feminist theories around difference. Instead, GBA continues to concentrate on differences between men and women, treating each category as a unitary, one-dimensional category of analysis that obscures the differences among and between women. From government to civil society,

While these identity politics were extremely important in opening up spaces for marginalized women to speak, it failed to go beyond issues of representation and recognition. Further, in debating questions of authority and authenticity — who should speak about what and why — and in claiming categories on our own terms, identity politics will not independently destroy underlying systems and structures of disempowerment, though empowering for some. These feminist movements also brought new efforts within second wave

feminism to “add on” other social categories to gender. Such “add and stir” approaches, however, continued to neglect the interconnecting root causes of women’s disempowerment and continuing marginalization.

Feminist thought and activism into the limitations of GBA demonstrate that applying only one entry point into analysis simplifies and reduces what are actually very complex systems of oppression. CRIAW sees gender as only one relationship of power, narrowly understood as sex discrimination between men and women, and insufficient to move women’s equality forward. GBA cannot be viewed as the primary or most important lens of analysis in the women’s movements. Even when gender is understood as a complex social construction, involving other grounds of discrimination, not all problems facing women will be visible by prioritizing a gender based analysis. Moreover, problems in government implementation of a more complex GBA model have not been resolved.<sup>4</sup>




Today, the landscape of the feminist struggle has changed. Many women who have invested years in putting issues central to marginalized women onto the political agenda are moving away from or bypassing identity politics and focusing their energies elsewhere. Participants in today’s women’s movements have worked to take apart categories such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, citizenship, disabilities, and sexualities to show how categories of identity are socially constructed. Using IFFs, social categories such as race, class, gender, sexualities, abilities, citizen-

ship, and Aboriginality among others, operate relationally; these categories do not stand on their own, but rather gain meaning and power by reinforcing and referencing each other.

A focus on gender based discrimination alone fails to recognize and address the multi-faceted causes and impacts of marginalization on the lives of women most adversely affected by poverty and exclusion locally and globally. For example, the role of colonization in the marginalization and oppression of indigenous women or the role of globalization in the lives of women living in more disadvantaged countries worldwide are inseparable from their gender. In recognizing how relations of power intersect to structure women’s lives, gender is no longer sufficient to generate a deeply complex analysis.

Feminists working within the government must confront a very resistant system and may have to limit their discussions about gender-based policy analysis to make women’s equality acceptable. Nonetheless, while acknowledging the challenges of changing state practices and ideologies, the women’s movements must not accept these terms as our own. Gender based strategies in their various incarnations of GBA, gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming are limited and will not advance the equality of women who are most marginalized. Alternatives are needed.



## THE WAY FORWARD: SHIFTING TO IFFs

After 500 years of refinement through colonizing and nationalizing regimes within capitalist and patriarchal structures, it will not be easy to unravel and reveal these shifting and intersecting webs of oppression. What are urgently needed are alternative frameworks which move beyond western models which idealize the advancement of the individual disconnected

Today, the struggle for equality is being fought from many different levels and perspectives. Strategies of coalition building, networking, and grassroots community building continue to offer important insights and help the women's movements build strength and resistance. Social justice work in policy and activism has clearly shown that institutional policies and practices

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*As women's movements are now globally connected, a much more plural, diverse range of tools and resources for analysis and activism are available to challenge dominant powers. Shifting to IFFs is one way to access the range of marginalized knowledge that is available to social justice activists around the world.*

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from families and communities. IFFs provide potentially transformative alternatives. They unravel how social categories of difference intersect in constantly changing ways in order to crack open oppressive dialogues, structures and practices. This is the first task ahead.

mediate women's lives in complex ways. Social justice work demands thinking and acting at the local, national and the global levels simultaneously because mechanisms of power are interconnected across time and space. Building different and better visions requires valuing and learning from indigenous knowledge



traditions within Canada and from our sisters and brothers in the South.



How and where social justice and feminist activists begin their analysis depends on the specific conditions of the lives of those with whom they are working. While there are multiple points of entry, engagement and discussion, these cannot be determined in advance. IFFs are flexible and open to shifts and changes in the political, social, economic and cultural order. As women's movements are now globally connected, a much more plural, diverse range of tools and resources for analysis and activism are available to challenge dominant powers. Shifting to IFFs is one way to access the range of marginalized knowledge that is available to social justice activists around the world.

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## New Visions

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This section explores how IFFs can be used by women's and social justice organizations for internal restructuring and action and for rethinking external policies and practices to be more reflective of the full diversity of women's experiences in Canada.<sup>5</sup>

The first example describes CRIAW's evolving organizational journey towards IFFs in order to demonstrate the challenges for organizations who want to make that shift. It requires critically reviewing internal operations and structures to be more reflective of diverse women's interests

and experiences. Two concrete examples of how IFFs might bring about different understandings and strategies for change within immigration & refugee policies and anti-poverty campaigns are also highlighted.

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## CRIAW's Journey

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CRIAW's journey over the past 30 years (1976–2006) reflects the same struggles as those found within women's movements. CRIAW has been challenged by its board, staff and constituencies to have structures, policies, and programs that are representative of all women. This ongoing process has brought tensions and struggles both internally and externally. People have had to set aside focusing on one existing framework to learn to open up to multiple perspectives and different voices. CRIAW is still in the processes of trying to bring together an organization reflective of the full diversity of women in Canada.

Struggles against patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, and globalization have brought conflict but have also forced the organization to rethink its priorities. Since its foundation, CRIAW has been aware that women from various backgrounds are marginalized and that CRIAW's own board and staff should be more representative.

In the 1980s, board and staff realized that many women were not engaged in CRIAW's work on women's equality. Attempts were made to become more inclusive by 'adding' to its structures 'one single category' of women at a time. For instance, in an effort to become

bilingual, CRIAW developed policies in the early 80s that ensured greater representation from francophone Quebec on its board. It also began conducting research in French, translating most publications into French, and later increased representation of francophone women outside Quebec. Despite these efforts, CRIAW has yet to become a fully bilingual organization in which many Francophone women benefit from activities or are involved.

Diverse groups of women criticized CRIAW for not providing spaces for more marginalized women to speak. CRIAW began to seriously reconsider the representation of marginalized women within its structures, publications, conferences, and alliances with many feminist movements. Lesbians argued that they remained invisible in CRIAW's conferences as well as in CRIAW's work in general. By this time, the organization also acknowledged the lack of representation of Aboriginal women and tried to collaborate more with Aboriginal and northern women by organizing a conference in the North. To this day, CRIAW has no Aboriginal women on its board and is still trying to find ways to collaborate with Aboriginal feminist organizations.

In the early 90s, CRIAW sought to reach racialized and immigrant women by organizing one of the first national conferences on feminism and anti-racism. This conference, held in Toronto in 1992, attracted over 1,000 participants. At the same time CRIAW also engaged in discussions as to how one defines feminism, and how to be more accessible to women in

the community as well as younger and older women. In the mid 90s, CRIAW conducted its first study to document how it and other national equality seeking women's organizations were moving towards becoming more inclusive and diverse, entitled *Looking Towards Change: How National Organizations Facilitate or Hinder Inclusion and Diversity*.<sup>6</sup>

In the last five years (2000–2005), CRIAW has exposed the experiences of marginalized women via fact sheets on the intersection of race and gender, violence against women and girls, immigrant and refugee women, and women's interaction with peace, security and poverty. CRIAW has produced publications on barriers faced by racialized women and Aboriginal women in academia, and conducted research using GBA, gender and diversity analysis, and integrated feminist analysis.

In 2004, a new board structure was designed for CRIAW, requiring representation from diverse regions and social groups. The aim was to become more consciously aware of equality in representation across multiple categories. The term Intersectional Feminist Frameworks (IFFs) arose out of a think tank<sup>7</sup> CRIAW hosted in June 2005.

CRIAW's transformation is still underway, but the organization's focus has shifted to rethinking its internal structures and policies through the knowledge that multiple perspectives and different voices must inform all our work.

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## From GBA to IFFs: Policies Directly Affecting Immigrant and Refugee Women

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The limitations of a GBA perspective to examining policies affecting immigrant and refugee women and the added value of IFFs will be highlighted through three examples. A GBA perspective identifies discrimination flowing from immigration laws that position women as dependents of male spouses. For example, women are discriminated against in English language training programs because programs are designed to support labor market entry and are time limited. Women must often stay at home to raise children and settle the family, partly because patriarchal ideologies and practices limit many women's options. Programs often fail to adapt to or to challenge this reality. Moreover, courses do not provide adequate and/or affordable child care so women can attend regularly. Immigrant and refugee families often cannot afford to pay for language courses and lack access to a social support network. Consequently, women's professional qualifications may erode over time, and they may remain isolated in a language ghetto.

IFFs not only look at gender relations but bring the global political economy into an analysis of immigration by examining World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other international free-trade policies. IFFs can show how conditions in both sending and receiving countries work together to push women and men to migrate in search of work, with unequal results. The economies of Canada and other western countries create a demand for low

paid, highly skilled and yet vulnerable workers to service the growth of capital as well as to produce cheap products for consumption. The migration of women can be understood as situated at the junction where trade, labor, citizenship, education, training, social welfare, health, military, national security, and human rights policies meet. Women's migration and immigrant settlement can be analysed at intersecting levels of the individual, the ethnic collectivity, national and international structures.

IFFs offer a more nuanced and detailed examination of migrant women's lives by looking at historical links among colonialism, nation formation, economic globalization and immigration policies. Such approaches understand racism, sexism, ageism, and discrimination based on language and disability as embedded within immigration and refugee policies, not attributes of the individual or a consequence of migrant women's inability to adapt to the host society.

As another example, domestic worker advocacy groups have been trying for years to change the government's Live-in Caregiver Program which requires foreign domestic workers to live with their employer as a visa condition. Yet, despite their efforts, they have failed to convince the government and the public that the live-in requirement is discriminatory. Considerable evidence has shown that the live-in requirement increases women's vulnerability to abuse, exploitation, often unacceptable work conditions, and isolation. Although domestic worker advocacy groups have struggled to educate government, mainstream women and social

justice movements of their situation, this issue is still not seen as a serious social issue. One reason that many Canadians do not grasp the seriousness of this issue is that a gender only lens fails to take into account the inequalities that exist among women that permit women, from more affluent countries and classes to employ and oppress poorer women from developing countries. A GBA analysis is unable to account for the racialized and ethnicized stereotypes and discourses that make *certain* women suitable for paid domestic service. Under a GBA lens, it appears that this program is women friendly; Canadian women who require child care assistance are helped by migrant women who want to enter Canada to work, who hope to become citizens, and who would not otherwise be accepted as immigrants without a very long wait and much scrutiny.

nation formation. In other words, the live-in caregiver program would no longer be seen as a “special interest” problem, it would be situated in a broader social and historical context. It would bring an analysis of how the interaction of immigration, employment standards, citizenship, exclusionary and restrictive labour policies among other laws and regulations work together to exclude racialised women and to limit their equal treatment. Their unfair work conditions and devalued labour could be connected to women workers’ rights and organizing.

IFFS would analyze the interconnections between the global and the local. The Live-In Caregiver Program provides wealthy Canadian families with nannies mainly from the Philippines and Caribbean. This program enables privileged Canadian women to work outside

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*Using IFFs, inclusion and exclusion are considered not only through economic lens, but also through social and cultural forces of citizenship and nation formation. With IFFs, issues can be redefined from “failure to integrate” to “failure to include.”*

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Under IFFs, social justice groups could bring a more complex analysis to this situation. Indeed, many domestic worker advocacy groups have been at the forefront of furthering our understanding of IFFs through their work. There is not room to provide a full analysis here, however we can sketch some of the ways that IFFs could offer different insights. The live-in caregiver program would be situated in its historical context, and the long-standing racism and sexism of Canadian immigration policy would be identified and linked to colonialism and

the home by taking advantage of women from the south who are trying to immigrate into Canada because there are few job opportunities in their home country and they would like more financial security for themselves and often for their families both in Canada and back home. By making this the only program/class that fully recognizes the skills associated with domestic and caring work, immigration policy makes it difficult for women with these skills to immigrant under other programs.<sup>8</sup>

As a final example, a GBA approach recognizes gendered violence mainly because it fits within a sex discrimination model; however racism, homophobia, ability/disability and or the impact of globalization as triggering dimensions of violence may not be seen as a causal factor unless women's advocacy organizations push these points.

IFFs facilitate resistance on multiple fronts, not just against gender discrimination. For example, IFFs identify that in a world migration system, Canada's policies privilege white, Christian, English speaking, male applicants who have been educated in commonwealth countries. Racism and racialized discounting of labor and education will likely be reflected in labor market experiences of new arrivals, with racialized immigrant women faring poorly. In turn, they

single policy for adjustment and integration into Canadian society will work for all. Efforts to resettle different immigrant and refugee families must be tailored to specific cultural needs of women, not based on a one-sized fits all approach.

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### From GBA to IFFs: Anti-Poverty Campaigns

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Conventional anti-poverty campaigns have largely focused primarily on capitalism as the main system of power contributing to oppression experienced by the poor. Very few anti-poverty campaigns have attempted to apply intersectional frameworks of how poverty is constructed and its disproportional impact on certain racialized groups of people. Within anti-poverty movements, we have witnessed the

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*Discourse on the feminization and racialization of poverty involves analyzing how occupation, nation building, slavery, labour migration, employment regulation, and disenfranchisement contribute to poverty experienced by marginalized indigenous and racialized women. Within IFFs, rethinking poverty would not only include economic disadvantage but also social exclusion of the most marginalized women.*

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may find themselves expelled from the formal to the informal, precarious and unregulated labor market. Policies must be formulated to ensure that racialized immigrant and refugee women do not form a labor market ghetto.

Immigration applicants from different parts of the world will face different challenges; IFFs consider the diversity of experience among different groups of immigrant women, recognizing that no

continued lack of discussion around colonization and citizenship and immigration laws that bring about the deepening of poverty experienced by indigenous, refugee and immigrant women.

IFFs attempt to examine the deepening of poverty experienced by racialized women as a result of present and historical social and economic policies. The impact of laws such as the Indian Act and the Immigration and Refugee

Protection Act are critical to the development and implementation of anti-poverty campaigns. Further, such laws interact simultaneously with additional provincial and federal policies impacting marginalized women locally as well as globally, in relation to labour, language, ability, migration, land, custody and access of children, health, age, sexuality, imprisonment, and education, among other realities women face.

Discourse regarding the feminization and racialization of poverty involves analysis of how processes of occupation, nation building, slavery, labour migration, employment regulation, and disenfranchisement of racialized groups, among others, contribute to the depth of poverty experienced by marginalized indigenous and racialized women. Therefore, within IFFs, the process of rethinking poverty would not only include economic disadvantage but also a process of social exclusion directed at the most marginalized women. Processes of exclusion impede marginalized women's access to housing, childcare, education, employment, social services, occupations, and citizenship; thereby deepening the poverty experienced.

By implementing IFFs within anti-poverty campaigns, we recognize how systems of domination — patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism — reinforce each other to maintain power over the dispossessed and marginalized. Therefore, anti-poverty strategies must be fluid and representative of the diverse and complex legacies of dominant ideologies, while implementing social change from multiple entry points rather than only anti-capitalism.

# CONTRIBUTORS



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## Contributors

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This critical reflection piece was written by members of the IFFs working group: Bénita Bunjun, Jo-Anne Lee, Suzanne Lenon, Lise Martin, Sara Torres and Marie-Katherine Waller.

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The ideas expressed in this document are those of CRIAW and do not necessarily reflect those of the Women's Program, Status of Women, Canada.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> CRIAW, “Women and Poverty Factsheet” (3rd edition). Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2005

<sup>2</sup> A system of society or government dominated by men.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on contributing frameworks to IFFs, please see CRIAW’s “Transforming our Social Justice Work: Towards Intersectional Feminist Frameworks” (2006) available on our website at [www.criaw-icref.ca](http://www.criaw-icref.ca).

<sup>4</sup> For example, statistical data is still not disaggregated and cross-referenced to enable meaningful intersectional comparisons.

<sup>5</sup> The two examples on immigrant and refugee women have been selected among many other possible examples to illustrate the potential of IFFs to provide more critical and in-depth analysis into the complexity of women’s poverty and exclusion. IFFs can be used to examine many other women’s experiences of poverty and exclusion such as those of lone mothers or women with disabilities.

<sup>6</sup> Tobo-Gillespie Lulama, Torres, Sara and Estable, Alma. CRIAW, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> The change from “Integrated” Feminist Framework to Intersectional Feminist Frameworks arose because “integrated” is considered by Aboriginal women to be a synonym for assimilation. Frameworks has replaced framework because there are multiple

contributing perspectives which inform the developing conceptual and methodological articulation of CRIAW’s IFFs.

<sup>8</sup> See CRIAW, “Immigrant and Refugee Women Fact Sheet.” Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2003.

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## CRIAW Resources

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### Information Tool:

- *Disentangling the Web of Women’s Poverty and Exclusion* (2006)

### Factsheets:

- *Women and Poverty* (Third Edition — 2005)
- *Women, Peace and Security* (2004)
- *Immigrant Women and Refugees* (2003)
- *Women’s experience of racism: How race and gender interact* (2002)
- *Violence against Women and Girls* (updated 2002)
- *Women, Health and Action* (2001)

The above publications are free of charge (posting and handling will be charged for requests of 10 copies or more). Aussi disponible en français.





***A Tribute to Grassroots Organizing for Women's Health: Cases from Around the World***, Editors: Sara Torres, Prabha Khosla with Nuzhath Leedham and Lise Martin (2005). \$15 (+ \$2 shipping and handling). This publication is available in French under the title: "Un hommage aux organisations communautaires vouées à la santé des femmes: Des réalisations aux quatre coins du monde".

***Participatory research and action: A guide to becoming a researcher for social change***, Marika Morris, literature review: Martha Muzychka. (Reprinted 2003). \$15 (+ \$2 shipping & handling). This publication is available in French under the title: "La recherche-action participative — Un outil pour le changement social".

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Thank you for your continuous support!



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