
Background:

In the summer of 2020, OPPI issued a statement in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. The statement was responded to by a group of Black and other racially marginalized planners demanding action through an open letter to OPPI. This letter was shared with OPPI Council who approved the creation of the Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force in late 2020. Task Force members came from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, including many with the lived experience of being Black Planning Professionals.

Process:

In September 2020, the Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force was established to develop a strategy and action plan to remove systemic barriers in planning practice and increase employment opportunities for Black planners in the planning profession. The Task Force members met over six months in 2021 and generated a draft series of recommendations. The draft was shared with an Advisory Group of 42 people from the private and public sectors, academic community, and affiliated organizations for feedback. With their input incorporated, a final series of 14 recommendation was approved by Council in October 2021.

Outcome:

The Anti-Black Racism in Planning Task Force (2020-2021) issued the following 14 recommendations in four priority areas:

1. Journey to Becoming a Professional Planner
 - 1.1 Connect directly with Black planning students.
 - 1.2 Conduct educational outreach.
 - 1.3 Work with Ontario accredited planning universities.
 - 1.4 Develop a directory of a RPPs and Black community-based planners.
 - 1.5 Implement reverse mentoring programs.
 - 1.6 Advocate for a system of paid student planning internships.
 - 1.7 Inform the next generation of planners in K-12 about the planning profession.
 - 1.8 Reduce financial barriers of Black planners at different stages of their career journey.
2. Cultivating Relationships with Diverse Black Organizations
 - 2.1 Cultivate relations with organizations and related professions to work collaboratively.
3. Equity-focused Data, Policy Change, and Evaluation
 - 3.1 Address the lack of data on the demographic diversity of OPPI members.
 - 3.2 Advocate to the Professional Standards Board to address issues of systemic racism.
 - 3.3 Update OPPI By-law 1 with inclusive and actionable language to address anti-Black racism.
 - 3.4 Encourage conversations and actions to center the experiences of Black community members.
4. Professional Development
 - 4.1 Create planning learning opportunities that address anti-Black racism.

Progress:

In 2022, OPPI created a new staff position, the Director of Reconciliation and Social Justice, to lead implementation of both sets of Task Force recommendations. A day-long (re)gathering of the Task Force members and advisors, along with Black community members and allies is planned for May 2023 to begin to create an implementation plan for the recommendations and establish an ongoing advisory committee.