



# CPJ Equity & Anti-Oppression Statement

## Preamble

As a faith-based organization seeking public justice, Citizens for Public Justice is committed to applying an [intersectional](#), [rights-based](#), [anti-oppression](#) framework to our research and advocacy, as well as to our own internal policies. We do so in recognition of the inherent dignity of all people and our vision of a world that fosters the flourishing of all creation. We also recognize and lament the role that our own Christian community has played, and in some cases continues to play, in creating and perpetuating systems of oppression and inequality.

We believe that it is important to explore, expose, and remedy these power imbalances, and to provide clarity and consistency in our positions.

These commitments will focus on how the activities and work of CPJ, including the policies we promote, can bear witness to the realities of oppressive and unjust systems and the need to actively practice hopeful resistance, reconciliation, and equity.

## Acknowledgements & Affirmations

CPJ acknowledges that:

- The Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DoCD) and its associated edicts were used to justify the theft of lands, colonization, and the abuse of human rights of Indigenous peoples. This distorted theology promoted attitudes of racial superiority which were embedded in public and religious institutions and resulted in cultural genocide for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Overall, the church failed to recognize the *Imago Dei* (Image of God) found in all people. This resulted in the dispossession of Indigenous lands and waters, and suppression of Indigenous knowledge, language, culture, and stewardship of creation.
- Along with the DoCD, other harmful ideologies have defined what is normative. Unequal power has led to intersecting systems of oppression and injustice for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people; people of colour; people who identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+; women; people living with disabilities; seniors; young people; people experiencing poverty; and people with precarious immigration or citizenship status. These imbalances in power and denial of inherent rights and dignity have resulted in multi-generational, wide-ranging inequities in health, social, and economic outcomes.



- The rights, dignity, gifts, and abilities to discern the Spirit of God have been wrongfully dismissed or denied many on the basis of ability, race, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, immigration or citizenship status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

CPJ repudiates the Doctrine of Christian Discovery and its associated edicts. This repudiation is mutually liberating, as a distorted theological view based on domination and oppression damages all members of the church and erodes Christian witness in the public square. Given this repudiation, CPJ affirms that it will continue working towards the sacred call of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

CPJ affirms that:

- The voices, perspectives, and experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people; people of colour; people who identify as 2SLGBTQQA+; women; people living with disabilities; and people of all ages, class, religions, and immigration and citizenship status are welcome and needed in the work and community of CPJ. While CPJ itself remains rooted in Christian faith, we recognize the need to listen to, and work alongside people and communities that do not identify as Christian.

## Commitments

CPJ commits to examining our own practices and policies and applying an intersectional, rights-based, anti-oppression lens to all areas of our work, including our own organizational culture. We commit to elevating and centering the voices of people who are typically marginalized.

CPJ commits to integrating the Equity & Anti-Oppression Statement throughout our strategic planning and operations, including:

1. Continued learning opportunities for staff, board volunteers, and members.
2. The development and implementation of ongoing internal and external monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes.
3. The design, implementation, animation, and evaluation of our policy research, public education, advocacy campaigns, resource development, partner outreach, and communication strategies.
4. Regular reviews of our personnel policies, including for recruitment, hiring, and professional development.
5. A fair and transparent process to seek resolution to reports of harm or grievances related to our Equity & Anti-Oppression commitments.



## Outcomes

We expect that living out our commitments will result in the following:

- Increased representation and power within our organization for individuals and communities in Canada disproportionately impacted by systemic oppression (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people; people of colour; people who identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+; women; people living with disabilities; seniors; young people; people experiencing poverty; and people with precarious immigration or citizenship status).
- Strong partnerships among CPJ and our members with organizations and movements led by marginalized communities, resulting in greater collective impact to challenge oppression and build a more just and sustainable society.
- The development of a community learning path for CPJ staff and Board, and opportunities for members to continually grow in our capacity to cultivate equitable, anti-oppressive, accessible spaces and policies.

## Reporting procedures

CPJ invites accountability from staff, members, partners, and all those who engage with our resources and activities to ensure we are honouring this Equity and Anti-Oppression Statement and commitments. CPJ will be developing a grievance process to report instances of harm or complaints related to this statement and commitments. Accountability will extend to members of board and staff, volunteers, and CPJ events, campaigns, and resources. Should you have any questions or concerns in the meantime, please contact us at [EAO@cpj.ca](mailto:EAO@cpj.ca) and a staff member will respond within 5-10 working days.

## Appendices

If you would like to learn more about the rationale and process for the development of CPJ's Equity & Anti-Oppression Statement (EAO), please refer to these appendices. Additional resources will be added as we continue to operationalize our commitments.

[Key terms](#): Intersectionality; rights-based approaches; oppression & anti-oppression

Backgrounder: [Why & How Was the EAO Statement Developed?](#)

Backgrounder: [Repudiating the Doctrine of Christian Discovery](#)



## Key Terms

### Intersectionality

Intersectionality explores how various facets of a person's identity (e.g. race, gender, (dis)ability, age, class, etc.) can “intersect” and have a compounded effect on their experience of power and privilege. Intersectional approaches analyse how power, privilege, access, etc. are experienced differently by people and communities based on their overlapping social identities.

In the work of CPJ, this can look like exploring the varying impacts (positive or negative) of any given policy or program on specific populations or communities. We are committing to engaging in this type of power analysis both regarding our own internal policies and practices, as well as external federal policies related to poverty in Canada, climate justice, and refugee rights.

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### Rights-based approaches

Rights-based approaches explore and analyse policies and programs in terms of their compliance with international and/or domestic human rights obligations. Recommendations are made for both “duty bearers” (i.e. governments and others in positions of power who have a responsibility to ensure human rights are honoured and realized) and “rights bearers” (i.e. the people, communities, or other bodies who hold specific rights). Rights-based approaches frame issues through a lens of justice, rather than charity and can leverage international and/or domestic law to seek change, accountability, and reparations.

In the work of CPJ, we have a long history of using rights-based approaches in our advocacy and policy work related to poverty, climate justice, and refugee rights, with specific work in recent years to incorporate Indigenous rights specifically. CPJ's notion of public justice is consistent with a rights-based approach in that we recognize a responsibility on the part of governments and policy-makers to respect and honour the inherent rights of all people.

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### Oppression and Anti-oppression

**Oppression** is the use of power or privilege by a socially, politically, economically, and/or culturally dominant group (or groups) to disempower (take away or reduce power), marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group or category. **Systemic Oppression** consists of practices, policies, laws and standards that disadvantage a particular group or category of



people. **Anti-Oppression** is the work of actively challenging and removing oppression perpetuated by power inequalities in society, both systemic oppression and individual expressions of oppression. (Source: [Canadian Council of Refugees](#))

In the work of CPJ, adopting an anti-oppressive framework looks like identifying and correcting imbalances in power and inequitable outcomes, particularly for individuals and groups typically marginalized in Canadian society (e.g. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people; people of color; people who identify as 2SLGBTQQA+; women; people living with disabilities; seniors; young people; people experiencing poverty; and people with precarious immigration or citizenship status). This applies to both internal policies and processes at CPJ, as well as to federal policies and programs.

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