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Welcome to Part Two of the Green Justice resource kit!

Following the first half of the Green Justice resource kit, which introduced the concepts of environmental racism and environmental justice, part two looks at anti-oppressive organizing strategies to consider when organizing for more inclusive, anti-racist environmental agendas. Put these methods into effect and your organization will be rockin!

What does ‘oppression’ mean?

Oppression has been defined as the following:

- It is institutionalized power that is historically formed and perpetuated over time;
- It allows certain ‘groups’ of people to assume a dominant position over ‘other groups’ and this dominance is maintained and perpetuated at an institutional level.

In other words, oppression is embedded in institutions such as the government and education systems, and it confers power and a position of dominance to a group of people over other groupings of people.

Sometimes you will hear the term ‘systems of oppression’. This term points out that A) there are multiple forms of oppression and B) it refers to the pervasiveness and systemic nature of oppression. Systems of oppression permeate our language and shape the way we act and do things in this culture. Because systems of oppression have a history – that is, they have formed over time in specific political, economic and social contexts – we cannot eliminate systems of oppression over night. It will take strategic anti-oppressive organizing as well as an understanding of histories of oppression.

Also, systems of oppression are built around what are understood to be ‘norms’ in our social world. What is a norm? A norm denotes what is ‘normal’, acceptable, and desirable. ‘The norm’ is something that is valued and supported in a society. It is also given a position of dominance, privilege and power over what is defined as non-dominant, abnormal and thus invaluable or marginal. Recall that in Part One of the kit we discussed dichotomies. Norms are also considered to be stable or unchanging over time and they produce dichotomous pairs that define what is normal and what is not normal.

Take a look at the following chart of select forms and systems of oppression:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System or form of oppression:</th>
<th>Race’ oppression</th>
<th>Gender oppression</th>
<th>Class oppression</th>
<th>Sexual oppression</th>
<th>Ability oppression</th>
<th>Age Oppression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumed norm:</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male-bodied</td>
<td>Middle-upper class</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>’Able’-bodied</td>
<td>‘Adults’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is considered to be marginal or not the norm:</td>
<td>Non-whites or people of colour, Aboriginal people, mixed race people</td>
<td>Female, and transgendered, transsexual and intersex people</td>
<td>The poor and working class (i.e. specifically blue collar workers. This category does not include people who are simply working)</td>
<td>Homosexual or queer folks</td>
<td>‘Disabled’ people</td>
<td>Children, youths, and the elderly (seniors)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 This definition draws on the Y-Files: The Ultimate Youth Resource Guide.
Although this chart separates out each form of oppression and places each one into its own column, it is important to understand how all forms of oppression are linked and how they intersect. How are oppressions linked? Take for example the forms of discrimination a woman of colour may experience at her workplace. She may be earning less than her white coworkers (which includes both white men and white women) and less than her male co-workers of colour. She faces both racism and sexism simultaneously. As well, she cannot separate the racialized part of her identity from the ‘gendered’ part of her identity. We can visualize this by drawing lines that represent each form of oppression. The lines intersect at a centre point; this centre point represents a person who experiences these forms of oppression.

By acknowledging that systems of oppression are linked we avoid ranking oppressions or creating a hierarchy of oppressions. What does it mean to rank oppressions? Ranking oppressions means treating systems of oppression as separate from one-another and then placing different forms of oppression in an order according to what one considers to be the most severe form of oppression to the least harmful form of oppression. For example, someone might rank oppressions by claiming that classism is the worst form of oppression when compared with racism and sexism. Also the practice of ranking oppressions can shape personal and
organizational priorities around combating discrimination. Returning to the example of the woman of colour and workplace discrimination, the woman of colour’s employer may prioritize working on issues of sexism because the employers believes that sexism is a serious issue which must be dealt with. The employer may ignore racism and classism because he or she may believe that these forms of oppression are not serious or important to challenge.

The practice of ranking oppressions, then:
• Leads to disputes over which forms of oppression are the worst and least severe;
• Fails to recognize how different forms of oppression intersect or work together to oppress people;
• Avoids looking at structures of power and privilege because people end up spending time arguing over which forms of oppression are the worst instead of focusing on how power structures divide struggles against racism from struggles against sexism [e.g. ‘divide and rule’ strategies];
• Overlooks the fact that all forms of oppression are harmful and unjust, and it fails to recognize that the best strategy to end oppression involves tackling all forms of oppression at once.

Power and privilege

In order to effectively confront systems of oppression we must also address issues of power and privilege. It is often easier to focus on how people are oppressed, disadvantaged and discriminated against than it is to address how we as individuals may have privileges and as a result are able to exercise our power at the expense of others. Often times this means looking at ourselves and how we each have different forms of privilege; this sort of self-scrutiny is difficult. When we focus on how people are oppressed we tend to think that forms of oppression like racism is an issue that people of colour face alone and that it is not something that white people are also affected by. If we follow this line of thinking, people of colour are held responsible for eliminating racism and white people are left out of the picture. The truth is white people need to be part of the fight to end racism by confronting white privilege and power. Similarly, men need to be part of feminist struggles to end sexism.

WHAT IS POWER?  

The first part of the kit included a definition of power. We will revisit the term below:

Power is a relational term. It can only be understood as a relationship between human beings in a specific historical, economic and social setting. It must be exercised to be visible.

1. Power is control of, or access to, those institutions sanctioned by the state. [Definition by Barbara Major of People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, New Orleans]
2. Power is the ability to define reality and to convince other people that it is their definition. [Definition by Dr. Wade Nobles]
3. Power is ownership and control of the major resources of a state; and the capacity to make and enforce decisions based on this ownership and control; and [Alternative definition to #1]
4. Power is the capacity of a group of people to decide what they want and to act in an organized way to get it. [In terms of an individual], power is the capacity to act.

It is worth noting here the difference between forms of power that are ‘power-over’ and ‘power-with’. Power-over is power that is used in a discriminatory and oppressive way: It means having power over others and therefore domination and control over others (e.g. through coercion and violence). Power-with is power that is shared with all people in struggles for liberation and equality. In other words, it means using or exercising one’s power to work with others equitably, for example, in a social movement.

WHAT IS PRIVILEGE?  

Privilege is unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we’re taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

Let’s examine one form of privilege: white privilege. Below you will find several statements that mark an invisible set of privileges that are enjoyed by white people. Most likely, however, you will also find that depending on who you are there are other forms of oppression and privilege that will influence the truth of these statements for you, for example, issues of gender, class,
education and physical ability (again, all forms of oppression are interconnected and are not separate from each other). Place a check mark beside a statement if it holds true for you and keep in mind some of the questions below and how oppressions overlap/intersect.

__ I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.

__ I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented. (How are they represented?)

__ When I am told about our national heritage or about ‘civilization,’ I am shown that people of my colour made it what it is. (How are they portrayed in relation to others?)

__ Whether I use cheques, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin colour not to work against the appearance of financial reliability. (What other aspects of your identity might also benefit you here?)

__ I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.

__ I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.

__ If a traffic cop pulls me over or if Revenue Canada audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven’t been singled out because of my race.

__ I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.

__ I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.

__ If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.

__ I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behaviour without being seen as a cultural outsider.

After reading the above statements, can you think of similar statements that can be made for gender privilege, class privilege and other forms of privilege? If so, list them in the following boxes:

| List of invisible privileges: | List of invisible privileges: |

**Power flower**

Take a moment to fill out the following power flower diagram. Each ‘row’ of petals represents a specific social identity based on gender, class and so on. The inner most petal is where you list your personal identities. In the middle petal write down the identities of the people who are in power in your organization. Lastly, in the outer most petal list the social identities of the people who hold power in the larger society.

This exercise tries to demonstrate, visually, how your personal identities compare with organizational and societal power structures and identities. How do your social identities relate to those who have organizational power and societal power? Do you share certain identities? What does this exercise illustrate about oppression and power structures? Who holds power and who does not? These are just some of the questions you may want to ask yourself after filling out the petals.
WHAT DOES ANTI-OPPRESSION MEAN?
WHAT IS ANTI-OPPRESSIVE ORGANIZING?

Anti-oppression means a refusal of all systems of oppression, power and privilege. You may come across the terms “anti-oppression analysis” or “anti-oppression lens”. These terms mean that all systems of oppression and power are taken into account when examining and organizing against injustice. Also, an anti-oppression analysis acknowledges that all forms of oppression are linked and that the best way to organize against oppression is to take into account that oppressions are linked. An anti-oppression analysis is also an amalgamation of a number of strategies and analyses developed by various movements: feminist, anti-racist, queer liberation, and so on (check out the glossary for definitions).

Anti-oppressive organizing involves using an anti-oppression analysis or lens to challenge and reverse systems of power, discrimination and injustice. It also means confronting systems of power and privilege on an ongoing basis in your organizing; power relationships permeate our organizations and organizing practices. Anti-oppressive organizing involves being inclusive. Being inclusive can involve making meetings accessible to people with physical disabilities, or framing issues like pesticide reduction to include...
the concerns of workers in pesticide factories. There are a myriad of ways to be inclusive in your organizing. Like all organizing strategies, anti-oppressive organizing practices will vary according to the issues you confront; they will vary across time, location, the people you are working with, the resources you have and so on. So there isn’t one recipe for organizing anti-oppressively but there are some anti-oppressive concepts and tools that you can use. We’ll look at two below: being an ally and doing solidarity work.

### What does it mean to be an ally?

An ally is someone who actively supports and participates in struggles against systems of oppression. She or he is usually part of a dominant or privileged group; this privilege may be based on ‘race’, gender, etc. An ally works against these privileges by supporting the work of non-dominant groups. She or he understands that learning about one’s self as a member of a dominant group is a starting point for being an ally. Learning about one’s self as a member of a dominant group means being aware that:

- The experience of being part of a dominant group is hidden from you. This ‘hidden-ness’ is part of the invisible knapsack of privilege;
- You need to hear the experiences of people who are part of non-dominant groups and analyze things. You cannot see oppression as clearly as people from non-dominant groups and this can be an unsettling feeling. People from non-dominant groups will always know something more about the dominant groups than the dominant groups will know about non-dominant communities;
- The process of working against the privileges of being part of a dominant group is difficult and painful because it means that you must accept a shameful history that you inherited;
- One must balance the individual and collective dimensions of oppression. Individual feelings of guilt do not inspire action against oppression. As well, keep in mind that oppression works on a collective or social, structural level. Try not to over-personalize struggles against oppression, power and privilege.

There is no one way to be an ally. You will have to decide how to act as an ally, but there are several suggestions and things that you may want to keep in mind.  

1. Learn, reflect on, and understand the patterns and effects of oppression, take action with others, and take risks;

2. Work with members of your own group and help them understand oppression and make links with other forms of oppression;

3. Listen and reflect;

4. Remember that everyone in the dominant group is part of the oppression. Oppressive attitudes and systems are part of the air we breathe. It is inescapable. For this reason, members of a dominant group cannot claim that they are not sexist if they are men or not racist if they are white. Undoing oppression is an ongoing process. When someone, for example, claims that they are not racist, you know that they have barely begun the process of unlearning their privilege. Someone who has gone down the road of confronting racism will understand that this work is ongoing and they will claim that they are anti-racist rather than non-racist;

5. After accepting that every member of a dominant group is part of the oppression, try not to feel that you are a ‘bad’ person. Instead of feeling guilt for one’s history, take on the responsibility of changing systems of oppression;

6. Keep in mind that as a member of a dominant group you are unable to see the oppression as clearly as members of a non-dominant group can. When someone points out your oppressive attitudes or language to you, your first response should be to believe it (i.e. listen and do not become defensive). Think about, reflect on and learn more about the oppression taking place in that particular situation. Try not to become defensive – this is an overpersonalized response.

7. List your privileges and help others see them. Reveal the invisibility of privilege.

8. When you hear an oppressive comment or see an example of oppression at work, school, anywhere, be the first one to speak up and don’t wait for a member of the non-dominant group to speak up first.

9. Avoid thinking that you ‘know what is good for them’. Do not take leadership. Members of non-dominant groups will know what is good for them and they can

These suggestions are from the following books: Becoming an Ally by Anne Bishop; and Uprooting Racism by Paul Kivel.
develop their own leadership to strengthen their organizations.

10. Do not take public attention or credit for a non-dominant group’s process of liberation. Refuse to act as a spokesperson. News reporters may be interested in speaking to you because they are more comfortable with you or curious about you. Only speak in public if members of a non-dominant group ask you to speak from your point of view as an ally. Or speak on their behalf after getting their permission because speaking out will be dangerous for them.

11. Do not homogenize non-dominant groups. There are disagreements and differences within non-dominants groups just as there are differences within dominant groups. There is never complete agreement in any group or community – always expect debate and discussions on ideas and issues in all groups.

12. Learn as much as you can about the oppression. Your ignorance is part of the oppression. Members of a non-dominant group will not necessarily have the time, interest and energy to teach and answer your questions, so do some self-education.

13. Work with other members of your own group to unlearn the process of oppression. Share ideas and strategies around being an ally and avoid taking over the voice of non-dominant groups.

14. Do not go to members of non-dominant groups for emotional support. They will need to focus their energies on their struggles.

15. Assume that oppression is everywhere, every day. Be aware of who is at the centre of attention and who is at the centre of power. Notice how oppression is denied, minimized and justified. Again, learn about histories of oppression and understand the connections between forms of oppression.

16. Do not be surprised if you are confronted with hostility (from non-dominant groups). There is a reason for this – think about your role in causing this to happen.

An interview with youth activist Nick (in Saskatchewan) on being an ally

Nick is currently working for the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and he is heavily involved with a project to start a young workers union. We asked Nick what his thoughts were on being an ally and on confronting one’s privilege(s).

“For me being an ally is based on the recognition that liberation is not an individual exercise. […] Due to how oppressions work together people of all groups need to work together to overcome them so we can struggle for a better world. Being a middle class white guy, this means that I must look at how I operate in the organizations that I belong to and in the groups that I work with to check myself to make sure I am not taking up too much space. I think the most important thing [when challenging one’s own privileges] is to be conscious of your location, be conscious of your privilege, examine what you gain from it, and then make sure you don’t rely on it.”

WORKING WITH ALLIES WHEN YOU ARE A MEMBER OF A NON-DOMINANT GROUP

Again, there isn’t a recipe for working successfully with allies. There are some things, though, that you will want to consider and ask yourself when choosing to work with allies. For example, clearly decide on why, when, and how you will work with allies. Do you want to work with allies at all? What can allies do that would be useful? It is easier to figure out what you don’t want allies to do for you, but try to map out what you would like them to do. Decide on how open you will be with allies. Also, know who is a committed ally. Members of a dominant group who are domineering, who are unaware of their privileges, or are acting out of guilt will only make your work more difficult. Choose allies who are willing to do the work of self-education, who are aware of power dynamics, who challenge their privileges on a consistent basis and who are committed to struggles to end all forms of oppression. Allies may make ‘mistakes’ along the way. Being an ally, like fighting oppression, is an ongoing process, and a learning process. Again, decide on how you want to work with allies based on your organization’s needs and the needs of the movements and struggles you are involved with.
**DECOLONIZATION AND INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION**

Decolonization is a huge term that can mean different things to different people. Decolonization for Aboriginal peoples may involve issues of self-determination, self-governance, cultural survival and gaining ownership and control of their land and exercising their sovereignty. Decolonization for people of colour can mean ending racism, colonial power relations and healing from internalized racism and other forms of internalized oppression.

What is internalized oppression? This term describes a process whereby people of a non-dominant group internalize or take in and do not challenge their oppression. They may accept their oppression and agree with the values, ideas and practices that dominant groups perpetuate against non-dominant groups. Non-dominant groups accept their inferior status and they accept the power and privileges exercised by dominant groups. Often, non-dominant groups perpetuate oppressive attitudes and practices against members of the same and other non-dominant groups.

Why should we consider issues of decolonization and internalized oppression? Because organizing anti-oppressively will require members of non-dominant groups to examine how they have been affected by systems of oppression and how these systems shape how they organize and work with each other. This is an ongoing process and struggle.

**What is solidarity work?**

Solidarity means a union of common interests, goals and responsibilities. It means co-operation and partnership. Solidarity work can be pursued by people who want to challenge their privileges by lending support to campaigns, initiatives and struggles initiated by a non-dominant group. Solidarity work requires members of a privileged group to learn about their privileges and take responsibility for the oppression that they are part of. The points listed above for being an ally also apply here to people doing solidarity work. The Friends of the Lubicon is one example of an organization that is working in solidarity with Aboriginal struggles, specifically the struggles of the Lubicon Cree of Northern Alberta.

**WHAT DO OTHER ACTIVISTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT DOING SOLIDARITY WORK?**

We asked Lawrence, a tireless youth activist in Winnipeg, about his thoughts on how non-indigenous environmental activists can organize in support of and be in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples’ struggles. Lawrence presently works for the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, a grassroots, urban Aboriginal political advocacy organization driven by the needs of the largest off-reserve Aboriginal population in the country. Lawrence provided two thoughts on doing solidarity work:

1. “Help us by leaving us alone and by making others aware of our presence, like oil companies, forestry companies, mining companies, water companies, sewage and waste companies, military companies, governments, telling them we have to find other ways to grow, develop and live that don’t interfere with indigenous peoples way of living.”

2. “[W]e have to have a great big sit down, saying ‘okay, how are we going to continue to live together on this earth, ’cause there is a very good chance we ain’t going to find another place like this.’ And to those who won’t sit down and listen we have to make them listen. To those who won’t change we have to make them change because it’s coming to a point of no return. […] On all fronts we have areas we need to change as humans.”

We also asked the Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement (IPSM), a Montreal-based collective, for their thoughts on and suggestions for doing solidarity work. What is the IPSM? The IPSM is a predominantly non-native group that has been engaged with a variety of work including: providing direct support for Indigenous communities in resistance, such as Kanehatake, Grassy Narrows, and Secwepemc; raising awareness among other non-native people and organizations through educational forums; confronting the perpetrators of colonialism, namely the Canadian and provincial governments, multinational corporations, and international trade regimes such as the World Trade Organization; and making concrete links with other related issues, including the anti-war/anti-occupation movement, work being done by groups like No One is Illegal, and environmental, anti-racist, and workers’ movements. The IPSM emerged out of an apparent need for settlers (non-native people) to organize in support of a decolonisation movement which would not only offer immediate support to Indigenous communities but would also fight against our own governments’ systematic efforts to expropriate Indigenous lands and resources and to assimilate and exterminate native Communities.
IPSM’s suggestions for doing solidarity work

• Develop a basic understanding of the different forms of oppression that exist, where they come from, and the ways that they manifest themselves in different situations; be aware of the ways in which you have experienced oppression, as well as the ways in which you have participated in oppression. Keep in mind that while anti-oppression workshops are helpful in providing a space for thinking about and discussing these issues, we must be able to put what we learn into practice in our everyday lives and organizing work.

• Take some time to learn about the environmental justice movement, perhaps by reading a book, visiting a website, or, most importantly, talking with people who have first hand experience doing such work.

• Working for social justice and fighting to protect the environment are not mutually exclusive; they are intricately linked. Having a better understanding of how oppression works in a capitalist society will help to make the links between the social and the environmental more clear, and will lend itself to developing effective strategies for fighting for social change.

• Respecting the self-determination and autonomy of all communities which you work with is crucial. Oppressed and marginalized communities generally have a long history of having decisions made for them, and imposed on them by others, be they governments, corporations, rich people, white people, men, etc…Support community-based projects which encourage the participation of many community members and which allows for decisions to be made by the community.

• Get involved! Find out about issues that are facing different communities in your area. Maybe you can offer to volunteer your time with an organization or group that is working on the issue. In reality, there are so many ways of getting involved in solidarity work.

• Take your time to figure out what kind of work you want to contribute to.

Now let’s take a look at how different groups and organizations have approached organizing anti-oppressively and/or inclusively. You will find below a list of points on how to organize democratically; this list was generated at a meeting on globalization issues. Following this is an article on the lessons learned by an environmental organization that attempted to change their campaigns and organizing practices to become more inclusive. Finally, we’ve included a success story from the Bus Riders Union in Vancouver. **Jemez Principles for democratic organizing** by Rubén Solís, Southwest Public Workers Union; and Chair of the SNEEJ Border Justice Campaign [published by the SouthWest Organizing Project, April 1997]

**ACTIVISTS MEET ON GLOBALIZATION**

On December 6-8, 1996, forty people of color and European-American representatives met in Jemez, New Mexico, for the “Working Group Meeting on Globalization and Trade.” The Jemez meeting was hosted by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice with the intention of hammering out common understandings between participants from different cultures, politics and organizations. The following “Jemez Principles” for democratic organizing were adopted by the participants.

**#1 BE INCLUSIVE**

If we hope to achieve just societies that include all people in decision-making and assure that all people have an equitable share of the wealth and the work of this world, then we must work to build that kind of inclusiveness into our own movement in order to develop alternative policies and institutions to the treaties and policies under neo-liberalism. This cannot be achieved without diversity at the planning table, in staffing, and in coordination but always be careful that this does not lead to tokenism. It may delay achievement of other important goals, it will require discussion, hard work, patience, and advance planning. It may involve conflict, but through this conflict, we can learn better ways of working together. It’s about building alternative institutions and movement building.

**#2 EMPHASIS ON BOTTOM-UP ORGANIZING**

To succeed, it is important to reach out into new constituencies, and to reach within all levels of leadership and membership base of the organizations that are already involved in our networks. We must continually build and strengthen a base which provides our credibility, our strategies, mobilizations, leadership development, and the energy for the work we must do daily.

**#3 LET PEOPLE SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES**

We must be sure that relevant voices of people directly affected are heard. Ways must be provided for spokespersons to represent and be responsible to the affected constituencies. It is important for organizations to clarify their roles, and who they represent, and to as-
sure accountability within our structures.

**#4 WORK TOGETHER IN SOLIDARITY AND MUTUALITY**
Groups working on similar issues with compatible visions should consciously act in solidarity, mutuality and support each other’s work. In the long run, a more significant step is to incorporate the goals and values of other groups with your own work, in order to build strong relationships. For instance, in the long run, it is more important that labor unions and community economic development projects include the issue of environmental sustainability in their own strategies, rather than just lending support to the environmental organizations. So communications, strategies and resource sharing is critical, to help us see our connections and build on these.

**#5 BUILD JUST RELATIONSHIPS AMONG OURSELVES**
We need to treat each other with justice and respect, both on an individual and an organizational level, in this country and across borders. Defining and developing “just relationships” will be a process that won’t happen overnight. It must include clarity about decision-making, sharing strategies, and resource distribution. There are clearly many skills necessary to succeed, and we need to determine the ways for those with different skills to coordinate and be accountable to one another.

**#6 COMMITMENT TO SELF TRANSFORMATION**
As we change societies, we must change from operating on the mode of individualism to community-centeredness. We must “walk our talk.” We must be the values that we say we’re struggling for and we must be justice, be peace, be community.

Question:
What are some structures or processes that have been empowering and democratic in your organization or organizing work?

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**Seven Lessons learned by Greenest City**

Greenest City is a non-profit environmental organization based in Toronto. In recognizing that new Canadians and non-English speaking residents are excluded from environmental programming due to language and cultural barriers, Greenest City developed a Chinese Community Outreach Project in order to make environmental programming accessible to Toronto’s sizable Chinese community. Through their experiences with this project and through work with other communities of colour, Greenest City has identified the following seven lessons learned from their attempts to diversify their environmental work:

1. Translate. Translating literature and presentations both linguistically and culturally reduces opportunities for misunderstandings and helps to remove barriers to participation in environmental actions. For example, Greenest City translated their composting resource literature into Chinese. However, Greenest City did not address the cultural component of translation, leaving Mandarin-speaking users of the compost resources wondering whether foods such as tofu (a staple in Chinese diet) could be composted.

2. Local Partnerships. Find and build partnerships with a trusted contact and champion from within a particular cultural community. This will help bridge cultural and linguistic gaps. A contact from within the community can provide valuable advice on approaches to distributing environmental information and ensuring that your work or project is culturally sensitive, timely and relevant. For example, Greenest City made contacts with a Sri Lankan-Tamil Seniors Group that helped them find tenants who were interested in community gardening.

3. Experiment. Be open to trying out different approaches and be willing to fail. Have trial projects and see whether they interest community members and if they are easy to implement.

4. One size does not fit all. There is no one ‘multicultural’ approach to environmental programming. Similar to doing translation work, environmental messages and approaches need to be tailored to each of the different cultural groups with which one works. For example in their community gardening work, Greenest City saw

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6 This article was featured in the “Colours of Green” issue of Alternatives Journal, vol. 29, no. 1, Winter 2003.
differences in gardening techniques and preferences between Sri Lankan and Jamaican gardeners. They then had to meet the needs and preferences of these gardeners.

5. Good news travels. Try different modes of communication and outreach. Messages can be conveyed through art, word-of-mouth, music and other non-written (or less formal) methods of communication. Greenest City advertised workshops and environmental activities in Chinese for the Chinese Community Outreach Project through local Chinese media (community papers and radio) but these methods of outreach were not always effective. Word-of-mouth can be more effective but labour intensive.

6. Seek multiple benefits (or broaden your environmental ‘frame’). Have a multidimensional strategy that has explicit social, health and environmental benefits and emphasize these benefits when talking about your project or work. Greenest City found that the issue of food access is a high priority for new immigrant families. While Greenest City was interested in the traditional environmental benefits of organic gardening, the physical and social benefits were more relevant to gardening participants as they need healthy food for their families.

7. No simple answers. Because environmental issues are linked to social issues, Greenest City learned that their best projects were those that connected environmental issues to political, economic and social inequalities that affect specific immigrant and racialized communities. According to Greenest City: “[T]he real lesson for both individual organizations and the broader environmental movement is to expand beyond program strategies [e.g., translating material or experimenting with different outreach methods] to approaches that are culturally and socially sensitive and inclusive.” (Emphasis added) Moving beyond program strategies will transform:
- Who environmental groups work with;
- How environmental groups work with people;
- And which issues environmental groups address.

AN ORGANIZING SUCCESS STORY: Night Owl Service is restored in Vancouver

In first half of the kit, we introduced the Bus Riders Union (BRU) through an interview with Aiyanas, a BRU organizer. We’ll return to the BRU and highlight their organizing success story.

In October 2001 the Vancouver regional transit authority, Translink, eliminated their late-night bus service. Aiyanas explained that poor, working class people of colour and women who work late-night shifts as janitors, security guards, restaurant and bar workers, for example, were hit the hardest by the cut. In March 2004, after two years of struggle by the BRU, the Night Owl service was restored. Aiyanas said that this was a huge victory for the BRU, not only because they forced the transit authority to change policy for bus riders, but because it marked a commitment to acting on the needs of the transit-dependent.

It is helpful to note some of the organizing strategies behind the victory. Many publications produced by the BRU are translated into languages that reflect the transit-riding population. At meetings they provide childcare. They have an “on-the-bus crew” that rides on the buses to speak to riders. This direct contact is a crucial part of their organizing strategy. As well, the BRU have drafted a “Basis of Unity” (check out their basis of unity at http://bru.resist.ca/basisofunity) which outlines their commitment to fighting multiple forms of oppression. These select organizing strategies highlight how the BRU is organizing to meet the needs of the transit-dependent.

What do you think of the points, actions and/or suggestions outlined above? Do you agree with them? Do you find them helpful or not?

The Greenest City and Bus Riders Union stories may prompt us to think about how we will develop our action plans to bring back to our organizations. The next section will take a closer look at making organizational changes through an anti-oppression lens.
Developing an action plan for anti-oppressive organizational change

There are different ways in which you can go about making anti-oppressive organizational change. Your approach will depend on the current structure and needs of your organization. You may want to begin the process of creating organizational change by asking yourself the following questions:

- What is your vision of an organization, agency, department, committee that works towards ending systems of oppression and domination?
- How will you work toward your vision?
- What have you already achieved in your own organization?
- How will you know when your vision has become reality?

After asking yourself the above questions, you may want to consider the following steps when creating an action plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step or task</th>
<th>What this task may entail</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify key issues that you want to work on.</td>
<td>You can develop a needs assessment or checklist to assess how your organization is doing in terms of anti-oppressive work. We’ve included a sample checklist in the next section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>After identifying key issues that you want to work on, try to formulate a goal. For example, if you identified the issue of inclusiveness in your organization’s promotional material as a key issue that you want to work on, you may set yourself a goal of revamping your organization’s promotional material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>How do you plan to achieve your goals and vision? What resources will you need? Returning to the promotional material example, you may want to set out tasks such as researching how other organizations produce inclusive promotional materials, and then develop designs for promo materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>When are you going to do this? What steps are involved and how long will each step take? When do you want to complete the project? What are the benchmarks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>How and when will you measure your results and/or assess and review your plans and goals? What are your outputs and indicators of success? You may want to review your work on a weekly basis and keep track of your work and successes along the way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>How and when will you measure your results and/or assess and review your plans and goals? What are your outputs and indicators of success? You may want to review your work on a weekly basis and keep track of your work and successes along the way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>How will your organization be sustained in the long term? How will it be sustained if its current members were to move on?</td>
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**Needs assessment or organizational check-list**

You may want to identify key issues to work on by using the following organizational checklist for anti-oppressive change. Keep in mind that this checklist is far from complete. Add or change items on the list according to your knowledge of the organization and its needs.

Beside each item on the checklist, indicate whether your organization has implemented this item or not by placing a checkmark in the appropriate section.
### I. System Administration and Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Not considered at all</th>
<th>In process not yet fully implemented</th>
<th>In process not yet fully implemented</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organization has adopted a comprehensive policy on gender, race, sexuality, ability and equity more broadly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>New policies are always being created with principles of anti-oppression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are policies and procedures for preventing and correcting incidents of harassment based on race, gender, sexuality and other forms of oppression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation in decision-making of community members from all non-dominant groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization’s management and supervisory staff reflect your community (in terms of race, class, gender, age and so on).</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a senior staff person who ensures that anti-oppressive practices are carried out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All staff members know their roles and the procedures for carrying out anti-oppressive policies.</td>
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### II. Personal Practices

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Not considered at all</th>
<th>In process not yet fully implemented</th>
<th>In process not yet fully implemented</th>
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<tr>
<td>A plan has been established to monitor and ensure that all levels of staffing continue to reflect the diversity of the communities you work with (in terms of race, language, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compared to white, Anglophone/Francophone staff, non-white, non-Anglophone/Francophone staff are as likely to be found in full-time, casual or part-time, managerial and supervisory as well as front-line positions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach and hiring practices have been reviewed to ensure elimination of systemic barriers such as word-of-mouth hiring and so on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hiring managers are able to assess equitably the qualifications, experiences and education of applicants who received their education outside of Canada and/or whose first language is not English or French.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hiring and promotion for all staff takes into account candidates’ commitment to anti-oppressive service delivery, as well as other skills or qualifications.</td>
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</table>
### III. Services and Programming

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not considered at all</th>
<th>In process not yet fully implemented</th>
<th>In process not yet fully implemented</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-oppression training is integrated into staff, board of directors and volunteer orientation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff who are actively countering oppression are recognized, rewarded and supported, through resources such as training, materials, positive feedback, positive evaluation, promotion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All staff members, volunteers and the community give ideas and participate in developing and implementing anti-oppressive practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The policies and practices for an anti-oppressive organization are communicated to all members and users of services, programs and facilities.</td>
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<td>The policies and practices for an anti-oppressive organization are communicated to all members and users of services, programs and facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adherence to anti-oppressive principles is a condition of membership and use of services, programs and facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All members and users are protected from oppressive behaviour while using services, programs and facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All members and users know where to direct complaints regarding oppressive behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Such complaints are dealt with seriously, quickly and fairly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Services and programs ensure accessibility for all members in the community, across differences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants in all programs reflect the diversity of the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Systemic barriers to participation of members of oppressed groups have been identified and addressed as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many new programs and activities have been developed to reflect the growing awareness of the needs and interests of previously excluded communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff knows how to address clients and members from non-dominant groups in a respectful and consistent manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Users or clients from non-dominant groups whose needs cannot be met from the organization are appropriately referred to other community organizations, and their needs are documented and reviewed to identify barriers and new program areas.</td>
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</table>
Both formal and informal mechanisms for collecting feedback from users and/or members from oppressed groups are used effectively.

Translation and/or interpretation services are available and easily accessible without cost to the user.

Programs are delivered by staff who reflect the diversity of the community in the region.

### IV. Communications and materials

Communication and publicity materials are routinely assessed for oppressive language and images, and revised accordingly.

Community/multilingual press and media are routinely used in communication strategies.

Communications are in non-official languages, as well as English and French.

Images in communications, promotional and program materials show a diversity of people doing a wide range of routine tasks.

Publicity for programs and services effectively reaches a diverse constituency.

### V. Organizational Norms

There is recognition that anti-oppression is a goal of the organization and an integral value of the organization, its members and its staff.

There is recognition that there is a wide range of acceptable and valuable individual approaches to the following:
- Solving problems
- Dealing with bureaucracies and authority
- Participating in communities
- Functioning effectively in the workplace

There is recognition that not everyone may be equally comfortable in English especially in relation to colloquial expressions, and sensitive and respectful accommodation is made, where needed.
There is recognition that not everyone is equally familiar and comfortable with traditional Anglo-colonial methods of governances including, for example, Robert’s Rules of Order to run meetings; voluntary Boards of Directors. There is an openness to consider different and equally effective ways of making decisions.

There is recognition that systems of oppression exist in the organization as it does in other organizations and institutions in Canada, and for this reason staff are committed to anti-oppressive organizing.

Did the above checklist help you identify key issues that you want to work on for your action plan? If so, what are some of these issues? If not, have you already identified issues that you want to work on? If there are, list them below. If you are looking for issues on which to take action maybe the next section can help.

**Six possible areas you may want your action plan to focus on**

Here are seven areas or interventions that you may want to take on for your action plan. There are, of course, other interventions that are not included here. If you have thought of others that’s great! Go through the necessary steps to make your action plan happen. We’ve included suggestions below on how carry out the following interventions. Good luck!

**A. TRAINING FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS.**

You may want to consider developing a series of training sessions for staff, board members and volunteers. Training for staff and volunteers can be part of an organizational change effort for the following reasons:

1. It prepares people to participate in and shape change in the organization.
2. It provides a forum for people to learn together, to raise questions and issues, and to contribute their knowledge of anti-oppressive organizing.
3. It allows people to express their fears, insecurities, ideas and hopes in terms of anti-oppressive organizational change.

There are several anti-racism, anti-oppression training manuals that you can consult for workshop ideas (see resources section of this kit). Also, you might want to use the films and videos listed in part one of the kit in your workshops. Several sections of this kit can be transformed into workshops as well. For example, the cases of environmental racism in part one can be used in a workshop discussion that introduces the concept of environmental racism and justice. The invisible knapsack of white privilege list, included above, can be used in a workshop on anti-oppressive organizing and confronting white privilege. We have also included two workshop activities at the end of this kit for you to consider and even modify according to your needs.

**B. DEVELOP AN ANTI-OPPRESSION POLICY**

What is an anti-oppression policy? An anti-oppression policy outlines a course or principle of action formulated on the basis of anti-oppression principles adopted or proposed by an organization. Policies, more generally, are guidelines for people involved in an organization and they document what the organization is trying to achieve and how. They help groups make decisions on how they will allocate resources and how they will develop their services and/or programs.

Why is it important to develop an anti-oppression policy? There are several reasons for doing so including:

- to protect and support anti-oppression principles;
- to promote inclusiveness, accessibility and equity in your organization;
- to show a written commitment to principles of human rights;
- to create an organization that is accountable to the

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9 This section draws on Y-Files: The Ultimate Youth Resource Guide and the Policy Development Workbook: Diversity Policy Kit which is available on the Canadian Council for International Co-operation [www.ccic.ca/e/007/pubs_gender.shtml](http://www.ccic.ca/e/007/pubs_gender.shtml) (under resources, publications, Gender Issues and Diversity section).
populations you serve and that reflects the diverse reality of Canada;
  • to work against systemic barriers to participation;
  • to enshrine anti-oppression standards in the organization and create an atmosphere where all forms of discrimination are unacceptable.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN AN ANTI-OPPRESSION POLICY?
Some basic elements of an anti-oppression policy are listed below, but keep in mind that you can add or modify these elements according to the needs of your organization.

1. A statement of the issue or problem that the policy addresses and why the policy is important. Include definitions as well (for example, for racism, sexism, homophobia and so on).

2. A statement of goal(s). What does the policy hope to achieve?

3. An implementation strategy. Indicate how the above goals will be met and identify the steps involved in meeting these goals as well as organizational priorities, timelines and expected results.

4. Complaint and/or mediation procedures. Outline procedures for handling complaints. Who will be responsible for dealing with complaints and what sort of measures will be taken to resolve them?

5. Accountability and actions. Outline the responsibilities of staff, volunteers, members and so on in carrying out and upholding the policy. What sort of actions will be undertaken to do so?

You can view a sample policy on the Canadian Council for International Co-operation Policy Development Workbook: Diversity Policy Kit which is available online www.ccic.ca/e/007/pubs_gender.shtml (under resources, publications, Gender Issues and Diversity section). As well, there are sample policies in Anti-racism Workbook: Structural Change for Grassroots Organizations by OPIRG-Peterborough.

Keep in mind that policy development is an ongoing process. You will need to review your policy over time and make revisions. Also remember that you cannot take another organization’s policy and make it your own. A policy should be developed in the context of your organization with the input and help of staff, volunteers and etc.

What an anti-oppression policy can do
It can put responsibility on the organization to address oppressive actions.

It can act as an educational tool.
It can act as a set of guidelines and procedures for addressing oppressive situations.
It can publicize the organization’s commitment to anti-oppression.
It can encourage an organization to address oppressive situations outside of the organization.

What an anti-oppression policy cannot do
It cannot make individuals commit to anti-oppressive. The initiative should be present in the organization.

It cannot ensure that people from non-dominant communities will readily join your organization.
It cannot eliminate oppression from the structure and individuals in an organization. Oppression must be addressed and confronted on an ongoing basis.
It cannot make your organization oppression-free.
It cannot replace the role of discussion and action on anti-oppression.
C. DECISION-MAKING AND MEETING PROCEDURES
You may consider making changes to your organization’s decision-making and meeting procedures. A more democratic and perhaps inclusive way of making decisions that does not rely on the majority rule/voting approach is consensus decision-making. The consensus decision-making approach tries to work through the thoughts, ideas, concerns and perspectives of all members within a group. The group works toward a decision that is acceptable to everyone. Consensus decision-making will work in a group that is committed to principles of consensus: all group members actively listen to and respect and support each other. Consensus does not mean unanimity – there will be different opinions on an issue within a group but everyone accepts a decision in the end. An example of consensus decision-making at a meeting may involve someone proposing a new organizational program. Group members will have a moment to reflect on the idea and then each group member gives their opinion and thoughts on the idea. The group can check for agreement on the idea from everyone. If there are concerns about the proposed idea, the group can discuss them until an acceptable decision is reached.

In terms of making changes to meeting procedures, you may want to consider a number of things such as:
- designating a person at a meeting, perhaps the facilitator, to make sure that everyone’s voice is heard. This role should be rotated among group members and group members should receive training on how to conduct meetings in an inclusive manner and on how to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate equally in the meeting;
- holding meetings on a day when everyone will be able to attend e.g. not on religious holidays for various religions;
- having meetings in an accessible venue, for example a space that is accessible for people with disabilities and a location that is accessible for people who rely on public transit;
- providing childcare and translation at meetings;
- being aware of everyday domination, oppression and power dynamics within a meeting is important such as being aware of who is speaking and whose ideas are taken seriously and listened to thoroughly at a meeting. You may want to read over some suggestions on how to end everyday domination from the following site www.xyonline.net/tools.shtml.

You will know best what your organization can do to change its meeting procedures and decision-making processes. The above are just a few suggestions. You can also read further ideas in the books listed in the resources section.

D. COALITION BUILDING
A coalition is a loose network of organizations and groups that have a common vision or interest. Organizations and groups come together to work on a specific issue, campaign or concern. There is greater power in numbers and organizations can share resources, ideas and knowledge with one another and for this reason coalition building can be attractive. You may want to consider building coalitions with other organizations that are involved in environmental justice work. Being in a coalition requires commitment, so if you are thinking about forming or joining a coalition consider what you can offer to the coalition and what your goals and visions are for being in the coalition. You can begin the process of forming a coalition by identifying what issues you want to work on. Then find organizations with similar interests. Come to a consensus with member organizations on how the coalition will run by perhaps drafting a basis of unity or coalition statement.

E. PROMOTIONAL AND PROGRAM LITERATURE REVIEW
An organization’s pamphlets, website, leaflets, posters or promotional materials send a message about the organization’s vision of environmentalism. Your action plan may include a review of your organization’s promotional materials and suggestions for new designs for these materials. You will want to analyze the images included in these materials, specifically who is included in the images, what they are doing, how they are dressed, and what they look like in relation to other people in the image. You should also consider who is not in the images and ask questions around the language that is used in the materials. Will you include a statement on anti-oppressive organizing and a commitment to environmental justice in the literature? Are the materials translated? Where are the materials distributed? What sort of promotional materials do other organizations use? Design or suggest changes to your organization’s literature and get feedback from a range of people and organizations on their impressions of your work. Look into expanding the types of promotional strategies that your organization uses e.g. using art as a medium.
F. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

Your action plan may evaluate the inclusiveness of your organization’s programs, services and/or campaigns. You may even want to propose a new program which has an environmental justice focus to your organization. What you need to keep in mind when you review and propose a program is the issue of framing. Recall the discussion of framing practices in part one of the kit. You will want to ask yourself how your organization frames issues of environmentalism in their campaigns and programs. Try looking at the same campaigns and programs using an environmental justice frame. Also recall Greenest City’s and the Bus Riders’ Union’s points about organizing inclusively and anti-oppressively: Organizations need to be aware of and listen to the needs, concerns, struggles and movements of non-dominant groups. By listening and involving people of non-dominant groups, organizations can get a better sense of how to develop a more inclusive and anti-oppressive program or campaign. Work on being an ally.

A note on outreach

Often times organizations that lack an anti-oppressive vision believe that they can change their organizations by outreaching to non-dominant communities without including them in decision-making processes (see ‘tokenism’ in glossary) and without taking a critical look at the organization’s assumptions and beliefs about oppression, injustice and power issues. An organization must review its programs, policies and procedures and identify barriers that prevent members of non-dominant communities from wanting to participate in the organization in the first place. It could be that the organization is not framing issues in an inclusive manner or that staff are not as welcoming to non-dominant communities.

Workshop activity ideas

The following activities can be modified to suit your organizational needs and your training objectives. Remember to prepare well in advance for the workshop. Find out ahead of time how many people will be attending your workshop, what space you will be working with (how large is it?), what resources you will have (for example, a blackboard, overhead projector) and whether you will be working with another workshop facilitator. Most of the activities below focus on challenging common conceptions of environmentalism with the exception of one, ‘Power Line’, which focuses specifically on power and privilege.

ACTIVITY:
What does environmentalism look like?

Time: about 45 minutes to an hour

Materials: - a variety of images culled from newspapers, books, magazines, websites, organization pamphlets, catalogues. Have at least 20 images (or more depending on the size of the group). Select images from mainstream environmentalist struggles and organizations, and find images of environmental justice struggles.
- tape to stick images on the wall
- flip chart paper and markers, or a blackboard and chalk, or white board and erasable markers
- a copy of the cases of environmental racism in Canada (in part one of the kit) to hand out to participants who will be in groups of 3 or 4

Method:
- first, place images on the walls of the room. Spread them out.
- welcome everyone. Have people sit in a circle and ask everyone to introduce themselves briefly (what is their name, their interest in environmentalism and what they want to get out of the workshop).
- tell participants that we will examine common conceptions of environmentalism, and then we will question these common conceptions by looking at the concepts of environmental racism and justice
- explain to participants that there are images posted around the room. Ask participants to take a look at the images and to stand beside an image that they think represents environmentalism. Give participants about 2-3 minutes to select an image. Then ask them why they think this image represents environmentalism. Write their responses down on the flipchart.
- then ask participants to select an image that they think represents anti-racism struggles. Give participants 2-3 minutes to do this. Then ask them why they think this image represents anti-racism. Record their responses.
- finally, ask participants if they can find an image that deals with both anti-racism and environmentalism. Give them 2-3 minutes to do this, ask why they chose their image and record their responses. Ask them what the experience was like selecting images. Was it difficult to find an image? What were they thinking when selecting images?
- return to the circle and explain what environmental racism and environmental justice is (you can use the definition in part one of the kit). While explaining the definitions, refer to participants’ responses during the image selection activity. Did they identify principles of environmental justice in their responses? How do their responses compare with the principles of environmental justice?

- next, form groups of 3 or 4 and hand out one of the cases of environmental racism in Canada. Ask each group to read their case and have them discuss why this is a case of environmental racism. Return to the larger group and discuss each group’s response.

- wrap up by asking if participants have any questions.

Activity modifications:
- You can substitute the cases of environmentalism with the myths of diversity and myths of overpopulation and global environmental issues from part one of the kit. Before splitting up into groups, explain what racism and anti-racism are (see glossary in part one and two). Also, before the group work, ask the entire group if they can explain what the concerns around overpopulation and global environmental problems are. Then split up into groups, have each group discuss what they think about the myths and return to the larger group for discussion.

- You can substitute the cases of environmentalism with pamphlets and literature (can also be print outs from websites) from mainstream environmental organizations and environmental justice organizations. Ask groups to examine how the mainstream environmental group defines environment and environmentalism, and do the same with the environmental justice literature. Discuss group findings in the larger group.

- You may also want to bring in a discussion of dichotomies and common definitions of environment when explaining the concepts of environmental racism and justice.

VIDEO SCREENING:

Stories from the front lines of environmental justice struggles

Time: depends on the length of the video you choose to show

Materials: – an environmental justice video (select one from the list of videos in part one of the kit, such as ’Remember Africville’ or ’The Original Summit’)
- T.V. and VCR
- flipchart paper and markers, or blackboard and chalk, or white board and erasable markers

Method:
- first, set up the T.V. and VCR and cue the video
- welcome everyone. Have people sit in a circle and ask everyone to introduce themselves briefly (what is their name, their interest in environmentalism and what they want to get out of the workshop).
- ask people to throw out terms or words that they associate with environmentalism. Record their response on the flipchart.
- tell participants that we will question common conceptions of environmentalism by looking at the concepts of environmental racism and justice. We will do this by watching the following video which tells a particular story of Aboriginal people and/or people of colour fighting for environmental justice. Introduce the video (the title, date of production, director) and give a brief summary of the video. Explain what environmental racism and environmental justice mean (see explanation in part one of the kit).
- play the video.
- afterwards ask participants what they thought of the video. Ask them to reflect on the ideas in the video and return to the flipchart paper with their ideas of environmentalism written on it. Have their ideas of environmental struggle shifted after watching the video? Discuss.

Activity modifications:
- You may want to focus specifically on Aboriginal struggles in Canada and colonialism. In this case, research and prepare to discuss Aboriginal rights and struggles in Canada and select a video on these struggles such as ’Hunters and Bombers’ (NFB) or ’The Original Summit’.
• You might want to raise questions around solidarity work and how environmentalists can work in solidarity with the struggles discussed in the video. Explain what solidarity work is (see brief definition in this kit) and discuss some of the difficulties and possibilities of doing solidarity work.

DISCUSSING PRIVILEGE AND POWER:
The class-race exercise, step forward, step back

Time: about 30 minutes
Materials: • list of statements
• flipchart paper and markers, or blackboard and chalk, or white board and erasable markers

Method:
• welcome everyone. Have people sit in a circle and ask everyone to introduce themselves briefly [what is their name and what they want to get out of the workshop].
• explain what oppression is and explain what power and privilege are (see the beginning section of this kit for explanations).
• tell the group that we will examine invisible power and privilege with the following exercise: Step forward, step back (this exercise is available online: http://rantcollective.org/article.php?id=37).
• Everyone starts out on a line in the middle of the room facing one wall. Participants are asked to listen to each statement and to respond if it applies to them. They are asked to do the exercise silently so that they can notice the feelings that come up for them.

1. If your ancestors were forced to come to this country or forced to relocate from where they were living, either temporarily or permanently, or restricted from living in certain areas take one step backward.

2. If you feel that your primary ethnic identity is “Canadian” take one step forward.

3. If you were ever called names or ridiculed because of your race, ethnicity or class background take one step backward.

4. If you grew up with people of colour or working class people who were servants, maids, gardeners or babysitters in your house take one step forward.

5. If you were ever embarrassed or ashamed of your clothes, your house or your family car when growing up take one step backward.

6. If you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or other professionals take one step forward.

7. If pimping and prostitution, drugs, or other illegal activities were a major occupational alternative in the community where you were raised take one step backward.

8. If you ever tried to change your physical appearance, mannerisms, language or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed take one step backward.

9. If any women in your family, including yourself if you are female, were ever physically or sexually assaulted in any way by men in your family take one step backward.

10. If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school take one step forward.

11. If you started school speaking a language other than English take one step backward.

12. If your family had more than fifty books in the house when you were growing up take one step forward.

13. If you ever skipped a meal or went away from a meal hungry because there wasn’t enough money to buy food in your family take one step backward.

14. If you were taken to art galleries, museums or plays by your parents take one step forward.

15. If one of your parents was ever laid off, unemployed or underemployed not by choice take one step backward.

16. If you ever attended a private school or summer camp take one step forward.

17. If you received less encouragement in academics or sports from your family or from teachers because of your gender take one step backward.

18. If you or your family ever had to move because there wasn’t enough money to pay the rent take one step backward.

19. If you were told by your parents that you were beautiful, pretty or good looking and therefore what you thought or did wasn’t important take one step backward.

20. If you were ever discouraged or prevented from pursuing academic work because of your ethnicity take one step backward.

21. If your parent/s encouraged you to go to college take one step forward.

22. If you were ever given less support than the boys in your family for going to college or pursuing work goals because of your gender take one step backward.

23. If you grew up in a single parent household take one step backward.

24. If, prior to your 18th birthday you took a vacation outside of your home state take one step forward.

25. If you have a parent who did not complete high school take one step backward.

26. If your parent[s] owned their own house take one step forward.
27. If you commonly see people of your race or ethnicity on television or in the movies in roles that you consider to be degrading take one step backward.

28. If you ever got a good paying job or a promotion because of a friend or family member take one step forward.

29. If you were ever denied a job because of your race or ethnicity take one step backward.

30. If you were ever denied a job, paid less for comparable work or had less qualified men promoted over you because of your gender take one step forward.

31. If, as a white person, you ever worked in a job where people of colour held more menial jobs, were paid less or otherwise harassed or discriminated against take one step forward.

32. If you were ever paid less, treated less fairly, or given harder work than a white person in a similar position because of your race or ethnicity take one step backward.

33. If you were ever mistrusted or accused of stealing, cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity or class take one step backward.

34. If you ever inherited money or property take one step forward.

35. If you primarily use public transportation to get where you need to go take one step backward.

36. If you generally think of the police as people that you can call on for help in times of emergency take one step forward.

• ask participants what they thought and how they felt about the exercise.
• if there is time and if you want to end the activity on an action-oriented note, discuss how people can confront systems of power and privilege (this is a huge question, but get people to brainstorm ideas). Record ideas on flipchart paper. If you want, you can also discuss briefly what it means to be an ally and how non-dominant communities can work with allies (see the beginning of this kit for a definition of ally work).

Glossary

Ableism: The normalization of able-bodied persons resulting in the privilege of ‘normal ability’ and the oppression and exclusion of people with disabilities at many levels in society. Ableism involves both denying access to people with disabilities and exclusive attitudes of able-bodied persons.

Ageism: The normalization and privilege of people within the preferred age range in a society. This age range defines who is taken seriously, catered to by most goods and services, allowed to have an impact on decisions in the society, and valued as a human being. Results in invisibility of, and discrimination and inaccessibility faced by, people outside that age range.


Classism: Refers to the ideological belief that people deserve the privilege or oppression of their class based on their ‘merit’, ‘social status’, level of education, job, work ethic, etc... Although many people suffer under capitalism, classism is relative, eg. student ‘poverty’. Classism also refers to the social dynamic of privilege, or elitism. Access to knowledge or to education, the privilege to choose when to be an ‘activist’, when to be risk taking (eg. risk arrest), and the use of exclusive language (i.e. ‘activist’ language, acronyms, ‘academic’ language) are examples of elitism embedded in class privilege.

Feminism: Refers to theories, movements and actions that aim to challenge and eliminate sexism. Source: www.youthactionnetwork.org/rac/FireItUp/FireItUp.pdf

Heterosexism: ‘The belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and thereby its rights to dominance’ [Canadian Council for Refugees]. Describes an ideological system and patterns of institutionalized oppression which deny, denigrate, and stigmatize any nonheterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship, or community.

Homophobia: The fear and persecution of queer people. Rooted in a desire to maintain the heterosexual social order, which relies on oppressive gender roles.
Reverse racism: A term created and used by white people to deny their white privilege. Those in denial use the term reverse racism to refer to hostile behavior by people of color toward whites, and to affirmative action policies which allegedly give ‘preferential treatment’ to people of color over whites.

Sexism: Norms, values, beliefs, structure and systems that marginalize and subordinate women while granting power, privilege and superiority to men.

Source: www.youthactionnetwork.org/rac/Fireitup/FireItUp.pdf

Tokenism: Presence without meaningful participation. For example, a superficial invitation for participation without ongoing dialogue and support, handpicked representatives who are expected to speak for the whole (socially oppressed) group (e.g. ‘tell us how women experience this issue’). Tokenism is often used as a band-aid solution to help the group improve its image (e.g. ‘we’re not racist, look there’s a person of colour on the panel.’)

Transphobia: The fear and persecution of transgender/transsexual persons. Rooted in a desire to maintain the gender binary (i.e. the categories ‘male’ and ‘female’), which obscures the reality of the fluidity of gender and invisibilizes the experience of persons who do not identify with either category.

Resources

Training manuals and resource kits

Anti-Racism Workbook: Structural Change for Grassroots Organizations. Contact: OPIRG-Peterborough, Trent University, Peterborough ON K9J 7B8, T: 705-748-1767, Email: opirg@trentu.ca.

Canadian Labour Congress Anti-Racism Integration Guide. For a copy, contact the Canadian Labour Congress Anti-Racism and Human Rights Director at anti-racism@clc-ctc.ca, T: 613-521-3400 x262.

Change to Action: CLC Young Workers and Climate Change Project. Produced by the Canadian Labour Congress Education and Campaigns Director at T: 613-521-3400 x283, F: 613-521-5480, Email: education@clc-ctc.ca.

Fire It Up: A Toolkit for Youth Action. By the Youth Action Network (2002). This is available online at www.youthactionnetwork.org/rac/FireItup/FireItUp.pdf or contact the Youth Action Network at: 176 John Street, Suite #307, Toronto ON M5T 1X5, T: 416-368-2277, F: 416-368-8354, Email: general@youthactionnetwork.org.

The Kit: A Manual By Youth to Combat Racism Through Education. For copies contact: Anti-Racism Education, United Nations Association in Canada, #900, 130 Slater Street, Ottawa, ON K1P 6E2 T: 613-232-5751, F: 613-563-2455, Email: yfar@unac.org.
The KiT is also available online at www.unac.org/yfar.


Teach Me To Thunder: A Training Manual for Anti-racism Trainers. For a copy, contact the Canadian Labour Congress Anti-Racism and Human Rights Director at anti-racism@clc-ctc.ca, T: 613-521-3400 x262.

Y-Files: The Ultimate Youth Resource Guide. Contact yfiles_guide@hotmail.com or Dawood at 416-652-2273 for more information or to obtain a copy.

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation ‘Policy Workbook’: www.ccic.ca/e/007/pubs_gender.shtml [under resources, publications, Gender Issues and Diversity section]
1 Nicholas St, suite 300

Canadian organizations and websites

Aboriginal Youth Network
The AYN is foremost an online resource created by youth for youth. They are accountable to youth through our youth advisory committee which meets in person twice yearly and twice again via teleconference.
www.ayn.ca
Box 34007 Kingsway PO
Edmonton AB T5G 3G4
T: 780-459-1058 or 1-866-459-1058, F: 780.419.7266 or 1.866.419.7266, Email: siteadmin@ayn.ca.

11 The following terms have been culled from the Colour of Resistance website [Source: http://colours.mahost.org/faq/definitions.html], unless noted otherwise
Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF)
The Foundation is committed to building a national framework for the fight against racism in Canadian society.
www.crrf.ca
4576 Yonge Street, Suite 701
Toronto ON M2N 6N4
T: 1-888-240-4936 (toll free) or 416-952-3500, F: 1-888-399-0333 (toll free) or 416-952-3326, Email: info@crrf.ca

Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN)
MSN is a Canadian network promoting solidarity with groups in Mexico, Central America, and Asia organizing in maquiladora factories and export processing zones to improve conditions and win a living wage.
www.maquilasolidarity.org
606 Shaw Street
Toronto ON M6G 3L6
T: 416-532-8584, F: 416-532-7688, Email: info@maquilasolidarity.org

Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs)
There are 23 PIRGs on university campuses across Canada including Calgary, Edmonton (University of Alberta), Waterloo, Simon Fraser, Victoria, Toronto, McGill, York, and Carleton. PIRGs are an excellent source for information on organizing anti-oppressively and inclusively. You may want to first contact the Waterloo PIRG for more information about PIRGs across Canada.
www.wpirg.org
University of Waterloo, Student Life Centre 2134/2135
Waterloo, ON N2L 3G1
T: 519-888-4882, F: 519-725-3093, Email: info@wpirg.org

Tiny Giant Magazine/The Students Commission (TG/SC)
TG/SC is a diverse, global-minded organization that is run by youth for youth across Canada. We strive to create opportunities for empowerment through innovative and educational processes and products. There are several offices across Canada. You can visit their website for more information at www.tgmag.ca.

American organizations and websites
Active Solidarity.
An online resource center for the struggle against white supremacy.
www.activesolidarity.net

JustAct
JustAct is a national, nonprofit organization promoting youth leadership and action for global justice.
www.justact.org
333 Valencia Street, Suite 325 San Francisco, CA 94103
T: 415.431.4204, F: 415.431.5953, Email: info@justact.org

RANT Trainers’ Collective
RANT works to develop capacity within global justice movements to carry out creative, effective nonviolent direct actions to dismantle unjust systems, institutions and corporations while building power for our movements. They offer training and direct organizer support as well as educational pieces. Anti-Oppression Principles and Practices:
rantcollective.org/article.php?id=17

Student Environmental Action Coalition
A grassroots coalition of student and youth environmental groups, working together to protect our planet and our future. SEAC has an Organizing Guide which you can order at:
PO BOX 31909
Philadelphia, PA 19104
T: 215-222-4711, Email: seac@seac.org
www.seac.org/sog

WP is a free resource for antiracist education and activism; its editorial focus is analyzing and critically assessing racialized social privilege.
whiteprivilege.com

Tools for white guys who are working for social change and other people socialized in a society based on domination. A list of practical strategies for minimizing everyday domination from the “xy: men, masculinities and gender politics” website.
www.xyonline.net/tools.shtml