



## ANTI-OPPRESSION GUIDELINES

ArtStarts is committed to using its privilege as a well-established organization to address systemic oppression and colonial practices, especially those that we perpetuate. Since early 2018 we have been working towards being more intentional about applying anti-oppression frameworks to our core programs and also taking a bird's-eye view of ArtStarts as a whole.

Social justice through the arts is a powerful approach and now an integrated part of our work towards mission impact. More details on our mission, vision and guiding principles can be found here: <https://artstarts.com/about>.

*"The aesthetic experience of stories told through the arts can help us think more creatively, intimately and deeply about challenging social justice issues. The arts provide a realm where charged topics can be encountered and engaged on an embodied level and thus stimulate deeper learning."* - Storytelling for Social Justice by Lee Ann Bell

### ARTSTARTS' COMMITMENT

- We uplift the voices of under-represented artists so that all students see themselves reflected in arts programming at school;
- We identify and challenge barriers to our programs, services and facility.
- We encourage thoughtful, carefully considered conversations about anti-oppression and decolonization with stakeholders.
- We build our capacity and the capacity of our network to challenge unequal distribution of power and biases that lead to oppression.
- We support artists and educators who thoughtfully engage with traditional knowledge and stories in context.
- We dedicate resources to serve equity-seeking artists.
- We do not provide services to artists who practice cultural appropriation.
- We do not fund projects that are culturally unsafe and perpetuate systems of oppression.
- We provide staff, board and volunteers with anti-oppression training tailored to their role.
- We ensure staff, board and volunteers can challenge oppressive and colonial practices without harassment and discrimination.
- We develop and improve policies to serve our commitment to anti-oppression.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

We do not work in isolation; ArtStarts works through a variety of different relationships with artists, educators, schools, school districts, families, arts and community organizations. We ask that members of the ArtStarts community read and understand this document. We ask artists who are contracted with ArtStarts to hold us and themselves accountable to these practices.



*ArtStarts in Schools provides innovative arts programs for young people, practical resources for teachers and artists, and leadership in advocacy for arts in education.*

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## KEY DEFINITIONS<sup>1</sup>

**Diversity:** The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, some of which are visible and others that are not. It recognizes that we are all different, and that our differences can be a source of strength for the group.

**Inclusion:** Describes any effort to include people and value the diversity of their differences. In education, inclusion means all members of a school community (students, staff and parents) have equal access to the resources of their community and the opportunity to participate in all areas, regardless of their race, gender, social class, religion, sexual identity or other dimension of diversity. An Inclusive organization will reflect their communities' diversity.

**Equality:** The treatment of everyone as the same. Equal treatment does not recognize group or individual differences and in particular, the inequality of experiences, opportunities and options due to systemic forces of oppression.

**Equity:** Considers the appropriate allocation of resources and opportunity for access and outcomes. Equity is about accommodating differences to address barriers or disadvantages faced due to social inequalities in order to achieve the same goal. Equity is not necessarily the same as equality, although at times it can be.

**Justice:** A critical analysis of power in society. Justice incorporates an institutional, organizational and social analysis to address systemic issues that cannot be resolved at an individual level.

**Oppression:** The use of power or privilege by a socially, politically, economically, culturally dominant group (or groups) to disempower (take away or reduce power), marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group or category.

Source: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/ccr-anti-oppression-policy>

**Systemic Oppression:** Consists of practices, policies, laws and standards that disadvantage a particular group or category of people.

Source: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/ccr-anti-oppression-policy>

**Individual Oppression:** Demeaning and oppressive behaviour towards and treatment of a particular group or category of people, expressed through individual attitudes, beliefs and values.

Source: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/ccr-anti-oppression-policy>

**Anti-Oppression:** The work of actively challenging and removing oppression perpetuated by power inequalities in society, both systemic oppression and individual expressions of oppression.

Source: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/ccr-anti-oppression-policy>

**Cultural Appropriation:** Includes use of cultural motifs, themes, "voices," images, knowledge, stories, songs, drama, and so on without permission or without appropriate context or in a

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<sup>1</sup> All definitions (unless specifically noted) have been adapted and written from a variety of sources which are noted in Appendix A

way that may misrepresent the real experience of the people from whose culture they are drawn.

Source: <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview>

### **Equity-seeking groups**

Communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation.

Source: <https://canadacouncil.ca/glossary/equity-seeking-groups>

### **THIS IS A WORKING DOCUMENT**

This document is one step in our fight against oppression. We recognize that this will be an ongoing process and no document will abolish oppression. We also recognize the inherent contradiction in using policies and hierarchical structures to combat oppression. This is our effort to create organizational practices that are self-reflective, rooted in community and guided by a commitment to anti-oppression. These guidelines will be further developed and adopted as formal policy by December 2019.

## **APPENDIX A**

### Source of definitions

All definitions have been adapted and written from a variety of sources which are noted below:

1. Canadian Council for Refugees: <https://ccrweb.ca/en/ccr-anti-oppression-policy>
2. BC's New Curriculum: <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview>
3. Canada Council for the Arts: <https://canadacouncil.ca/glossary/equity-seeking-groups>
4. B.C. Human Rights Coalition [February 2003], Responding to incidents of racism and hate: a handbook for service providers, pp. 4-10; 28-32.
5. Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services: Aboriginal, Multiculturalism and Immigration Programs Department [March 2003], Future directions: setting the path for anti-racism and multiculturalism programming in British Columbia, Steering Committee Report, pp. 19-21.
6. Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, website, at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca).
7. Canadian Human Rights Act (R.S., 1985, c. H-6)
8. Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, 'Courageous conversations about Race', 2006, Corwin Press, Inc., Thousand Oaks, California.
9. The Access to Media Education Society, 2002, Peer Perspectives, Racism 4 Reel: Anti-Racism Resource Package, p. 22
10. Vancouver School Board, 2009, Break the Silence: The Power of Active Witnessing, Curriculum Documents, pp 14,18-20, 47-48.