



**BIAS FREE**

**Co-operative, Inc.**

*Working together to identify and eliminate inequities*

## Proposal for An Ottawa-wide Co-operative Legacy Initiative to Develop a fully Inclusive Ottawa

**Who?** Twenty to thirty participants from co-operatives across Ottawa, and representatives from communities that experience bullying, social exclusion, and other forms of discrimination.

*BIAS FREE* Co-op, Inc., is an award-winning<sup>1</sup>, UN ECO-SOC member, not-for-profit workers' co-operative that works in Canada and around the globe to support individuals, groups, communities, institutions and organizations to tackle sexism, racism, ableism, colonialism, ageism, classism, casteism, heterosexism and other "isms" that cause immense harm to individuals and societies would facilitate the process.

***BIAS FREE*** stands for **B**uilding an **I**ntegrative **A**nalytical **S**ystem **f**or **R**ecognising and **E**liminating **i**n**E**quities.

*BIAS FREE* Co-op, Inc., worked with UNICEF and the governments of Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, to design a process for setting up a National Inclusion Strategy insuring that the process was as inclusive as possible, with representatives from the various equality-seeking organizations, the disability community, larger community, government, business and the media.

For a more complete set of Testimonials about *BIAS FREE* Co-op, see Appendix I, and our website: [www.biasfree.org](http://www.biasfree.org).

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<sup>1</sup> 2010 Ontario Co-op Spirit Award as "New Co-operative of Distinction"; 2011 Nominee for University of Ottawa Social Innovation Enterprise of the Year Award

**What?** An Ottawa-wide initiative that builds on Co-operative Values and Principles to develop an inclusive city, which could be used as a model to be rolled out in every city across the county.

It would begin with a *BIAS FREE* Workshop 24-26 February, 2012 that would introduce participants to the *BIAS FREE* Framework and how it works.

This would be followed by a two-day workshop in March during which participants would use the Framework to build a strategy and action plan for building a fully inclusive, co-operative Ottawa.

Leadership from Ottawa-area Co-operatives in this initiative would leave a lasting legacy for the 2012 International year of Co-operatives that demonstrates the power of the Co-operative model.

**Where?** TBD. We would require an accessible room to be set up in an open square with room for 30-40 participants around the table, or seated at round tables with 8 to a table, plus break out space for interactive small-group sessions.

**When?** TBD. We are proposing the first Workshop to be held in February 24-26, 2012 followed by 2-days in March, 2012. Subsequent meetings would be determined and scheduled as the Action Plan unfolds.

**Why?** Recent events around Jamie HUBLEY's death have brought forward the issues of homophobia and bullying to the attention of the public. Homophobia, racism, ableism, sexism, ageism, religious intolerance and other "isms" are at the root of bullying and cause immense harm to individuals and societies. Systematic work is required to uncover and address biases in organizations, in policies, in programs and services, in media, in public attitudes that perpetuate (these isms) and exclusion of these various groups.

**How?** The *BIAS FREE* Framework was designed as a tool for systematically identifying and eliminating biases that perpetuate the various "isms" that deprive people of their human rights. The *BIAS FREE* Framework:

- Is built on co-operative values
- Changes how people think and gives them a new insight into how social inequities are perpetuated
- Stimulates discussion and soul-searching among people using the Framework
- Enables users to identify biases in their lives and institutions, to put a name to them and to begin to work towards resolving them.
- Transforms horizons, allowing users to see the world through “new eyes”, to internalize equitable values and to change their attitudes and practices.
- Leads to a more critical and thoughtful reflection on attitudes and practices, and ultimately to a process of personal and structural transformation and broad social change focused on human rights
- Makes people profoundly aware of their rights and the injustices around them
- Empowers women and men, boys and girls to solve injustices that they and others experience.
- Guides the development of Strategies and Action Plans for social transformation

For more information see our website [www.biasfree.org](http://www.biasfree.org).

## APPENDIX I: TESTIMONIALS

That 'power structures within a society serve to reinforce and maintain the various social hierarchies' may be undisputed, however, the fact that they are manifest across the economic spectrum and the uncertainty about what can be done has teased educators, researchers, and policy makers for decades. Finally, we now have a practical tool that is meticulously constructed, rigorously underpinned by theory, well referenced, and is challenging... Biases in the way we research problems can be a matter of life or death, biased research is bad research, this text is long overdue. The authors highlight the gravity of failing to remove biases and emphasize the need to remove biases that derive from all types of social hierarchies. They consistently direct the reader to the structural and organisational determinants of health thus minimizing the pathologisation of non-dominant members of society. Although the text focuses on the health sector and on health research in particular, the framework is transferable to any policy sector and across legislation, policy development, programmes and practices as well as research.

Please read and use!

*Margaret Sills, Academic Director Higher Education Academy Health Sciences and Practice Subject Centre King's College London*

I think you've produced an extremely important, practical and much-needed document that is going to be of significant use to researchers and policy makers. As I read through it, I was continually applying its methods and questions to my own on-going work and found the use of your template extremely useful in identifying possible gaps and oversights in my methods, research questions and analyses. From the point of view of someone (like myself) who is sympathetic to the approach you've developed and, particularly to the project, i.e. the need to promote and seek equality and non-oppression for vulnerable populations, this framework will be a very useful tool... It so clearly illustrates how bias operates and how applying the *BIAS FREE* Framework allows us to "see" differently and the very material consequences that follow from this.

*Roxanne Mykitiuk, Associate Professor of Law, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Toronto, ON*

Here is what participants have said about the Workshops:

- *"I came prepared to have my horizons broadened. You did not do this. You totally transformed my horizons! The **BIAS FREE** Framework has given me new eyes to see the world. I will never see things again the same way."* (Louise Plouffe, WHO Age-friendly Cities Initiative)
- *"I learned to recognize that I am worthy, that I am somebody and did not come into the world to be walked over..."* (Hospital official in the 2001 Costa Rica Workshop who was experiencing domestic violence)
- *"I left the Workshop today with the same sense of euphoria and hope as I had the day they released Nelson Mandela from jail"* (Black scientist from the Medical Research Council, South Africa)
- *I used to work or do research and think that I am BIAS FREE. After attending this course I have found out that I was not. The course has opened my mind. I know now where I went wrong, how and why. The BIAS FREE Framework should be used by all those who are truly addressing health rights, equity and social justice issues.* (Mwajuma Saiddy Masaiganah, People's Health Movement, Equinet, Tanzania)
- *An unusually sensitive, subtle, and incisive tool that can have immense value for self-critical reflection and transformation. Much of its power lies in its ability to be applied to a variety of issues in any context.* (Richard Jordi, Industrial Health Research Group, University of Cape Town, South Africa)
- *"We fully recognize that we [CDC] would not receive such positive feedback from session participants without your excellent presentation skills and your ability to create an open learning environment. Hopefully we will have the opportunity to work together again in the future.* (Drue H. Barrett, Public Health Ethics Coordinator, Office of the Chief Science Officer, Centers for Disease Control and Promotion (CDC)