# Black Housing Equity Framework

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2024

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Doctoral Thesis Title

# Seeing in Colour: A Black Housing Equity Framework to Address Anti-Black Racism in the Housing and Homelessness Sector

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The development of this framework was made possible with the guidance of the doctoral supervisory committee and through collaboration with research contributors. These contributors include Black individuals with lived and living experiences in a Calgary emergency shelter and Black key informants from across Canada who have expertise in addressing systemic anti-Black racism.**

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# BACKGROUND

This publication is the artefact component of a doctoral dissertation by a Calgary-based social planner and housing practitioner. The dissertation addresses the intersection of race and housing, particularly the role systemic anti-Black racism plays in creating housing precarity amongst Black communities in Canada.

Recognizing housing as a fundamental human right under International Human Rights Laws and the Canadian National Housing Strategy Act, provisions exist to safeguard against racial discrimination (Tuttle, 2020; National Right to Housing Network, 2023). Nevertheless, Black Canadians disproportionately experience evictions, housing discrimination, homelessness, and inadequate housing conditions (Ages et al., 2021; Rodriguez, 2021; City of Toronto, 2018; BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2020; Randle et al., 2021).

Their experiences are deeply rooted in Canada's colonial historical legacy of legalized slavery, dispossession, racial segregation, racism, and discrimination. These discriminatory ideologies have become deeply entrenched and normalized within Canadian institutions, policies, and practices and often go unnoticed by those unaffected by them (Government of Canada, 2020; Oyeniran, 2022). Furthermore, Eurocentric planning and housing approaches and insidious systemic anti-Black racism negate targeted interventions with dire consequences for Black communities.

In this context, the term "Black Canadians" encompasses a diverse array of individuals, populations, and communities in Canada who identify with African or Caribbean ancestry (Government of Canada, 2020).

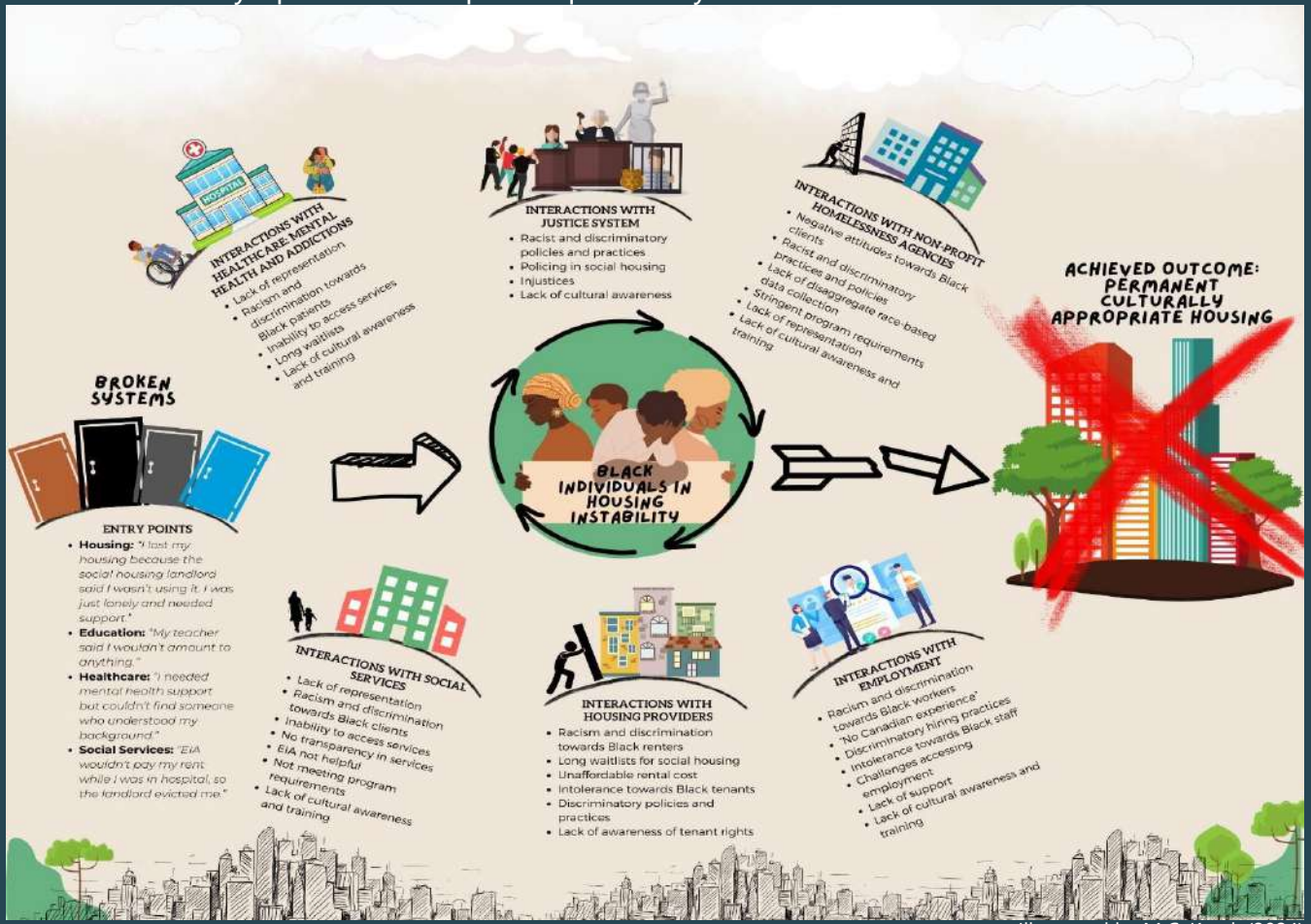
**Pathways To Homelessness: Inequitable Systems**

Experiencing homelessness is intricately connected to a multitude of factors, encompassing a complex interplay of structural challenges, systemic deficiencies, and individual circumstances (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2021). For many Black Canadians, homelessness commonly emerges from the compounding impact of multiple racially inequitable systems. Black Canadians encounter racism and discrimination in various systems. These include healthcare, mental health and addiction services, the justice system, social services, employment, homelessness-serving agencies, and housing providers. These systems can serve as entry points to housing instability and homelessness for Black Canadians.

For instance, in employment, Black Canadians may face challenges due to discriminatory hiring practices and bias against Black workers. Employers might reject Black recent immigrants for lacking "Canadian experiences," limiting their ability to secure meaningful employment. Moreover, Black Canadians encounter discrimination when accessing social services. Challenges may include limited representation at social service agencies, racism towards Black clients, lack of transparency on available services, strict program requirements, and insufficient assistance from employment and income assistance (EIA).

Unfortunately, these negative experiences contribute to systemic issues that heighten the risk of homelessness among Black Canadians. The image on the next page illustrates this further.

Homelessness as a Symptom of Multiple Inequitable Systems:




Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# THE PROJECT

Utilizing a multi-method approach, including design science, Afrocentric, and autoethnographic research methodologies, this research engaged Black individuals with lived/living experiences (BPWLE) in an emergency shelter and Black key informants (KI) who are experts in addressing anti-Black racism in their field to gain a nuanced understanding of the impacts of systemic anti-Black racism on Black Canadians experiencing housing precarity. The engagements highlighted the pervasiveness of anti-Black racism across sectors and the need for housing policies and practices to be grounded in equity and anti-oppression principles.

As a result of these engagements, the Black Housing Equity Framework (BHEF) was developed. The BHEF encompasses guiding principles aligned with the values and approaches of Black communities, as well as operational questions to guide planners, policymakers, housing practitioners and other partners in engaging Black communities to develop equitable policies and practices. The BHEF is a crucial step towards recognizing and addressing the systemic anti-Black racism and discrimination that Black communities face when accessing and maintaining housing.

# DEFINING TERMS

## A Shared Understanding

A shared understanding of a problem is crucial to working together towards a shared objective. When all parties clearly understand the issue, its underlying causes, and the necessary steps to resolve it, they can work together more efficiently and make informed decisions. This results in more favourable outcomes and more efficient use of resources. Additionally, a shared understanding promotes transparency and accountability by ensuring that everyone is well-informed about the situation and the actions being taken to address it. Working through differing opinions or expectations can also minimize misunderstandings and conflicts. A shared understanding is crucial for effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving.

## What is Anti-Black Racism?

Dr. Akua Benjamin describes anti-Black racism as policies and practices embedded in Canadian institutions that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, and discrimination directed at people of African and Caribbean descent and rooted in their experience of enslavement and colonization here in Canada (City of Toronto, 2017).

The contextualization of anti-Black racism within the housing sector underscores the pervasive nature of racism and discrimination within our policies and practices. A notable observation is the absence of targeted policies and interventions aimed at addressing the unique housing challenges encountered by Black Canadians. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive disaggregated race-based data collection on the housing realities of Black Canadians signifies a form of erasure, inadvertently signalling to these communities that their experiences are undervalued.

**What is White Supremacy?**

White supremacy, as defined by Jones and Okun (2001), encapsulates the notion that white individuals and their ideologies are deemed superior to people of colour and their respective beliefs and actions. White supremacy culture serves as the catalyst that fosters the growth of white supremacy. The National Education Association (no date) characterizes white supremacy culture as a manifestation of racism rooted in the conviction of white superiority over individuals from diverse racial backgrounds, advocating for the political, economic, and social dominance of whites over non-white populations.

Urban planning and the housing sector have been complicit in creating and perpetuating white supremacy culture by engaging in discriminatory practices, such as redlining, discriminatory restrictive covenants, housing discrimination, and insufficient data collection. As a result, housing resources have been unevenly distributed, with Black communities often facing obstacles in accessing secure and affordable housing. This disparity has led to negative consequences, including increased poverty rates, limited resource availability, socioeconomic hurdles, homelessness, and overall adverse outcomes.

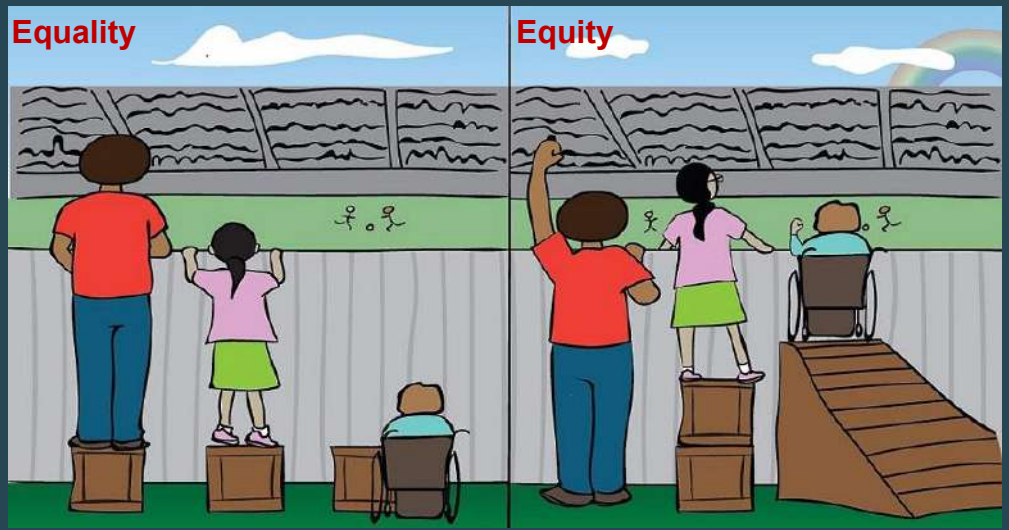
**What is Anti-Oppression?**

Anti-oppression encompasses strategies, theories, actions, and practices designed to actively confront systems of oppression (Simons Library, 2023). It acknowledges the presence of oppression within our societal and institutional structures and aims to reduce its impact while striving to balance power dynamics within communities. In the context of housing and within this framework, anti-oppression entails acknowledging and dismantling systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that hinder Black communities from securing safe, affordable, and appropriate housing.

**What is Equitable Housing?**

Before exploring the notion of Equitable Housing, it is crucial to understand the concept of equity. McGill University (2024) differentiates equity from equality by highlighting the significance of fairness and justice in both processes and outcomes. Attaining equitable outcomes requires targeted interventions and the distribution of resources to create a just environment for all individuals and communities (McGill University, 2024). It entails recognizing and overcoming obstacles to offer equal opportunities for the growth and development of all individuals and communities (McGill University, 2024).

This principle is illustrated in the diagram below:




McGill University (2024)

Equitable housing is a novel concept that has yet to be officially defined in the Canadian housing landscape. Nonetheless, in the United States, equitable housing is described as diverse, high-quality, and physically accessible housing that's affordable and provides access to various opportunities and amenities (Washington County Department of Land Use & Transportation, no date). This includes housing options for people of all ages, abilities, and income levels, conveniently located near essential amenities like transit, schools, childcare, food, and parks (Washington County Department of Land Use & Transportation, no date).

Equitable housing is a strategy that recognizes the impact of historical marginalization on certain communities and aims to address systemic inequities. It seeks to ensure historically marginalized communities have access to housing appropriate for their specific needs, including affordability, accessibility, cultural appropriateness, safety, and access to services and support.

**The Concept of Housing Justice**

Housing justice is not just an emerging idea, but a pressing need. It emphasizes making affordable housing available. Its fundamental objective is to promote good health, well-being, and upward mobility while addressing historical and ongoing disparities stemming from structural racism and other oppressive systems (Urban Institute, no date). Housing justice recognizes that social and economic factors influence housing affordability and require systemic change to address housing insecurity and inequity. Ultimately, housing justice seeks to create a society where housing is a foundation for health, well-being, and upward mobility. It requires a commitment to equity and solidarity and a willingness to challenge the status quo (Urban Institute, no date).

# BLACK HOUSING EQUITY FRAMEWORK (BHEF)

# WHAT IS THE BLACK HOUSING EQUITY FRAMEWORK (BHEF)?

The Black Housing Equity Framework (BHEF) is a strategic approach to address the systemic and institutional barriers Black communities face in the housing and homelessness sector.

This framework aims to foster meaningful engagement with Black communities by supporting planners, policymakers, and housing practitioners. It does so through a series of phases and operational questions designed to encourage an examination of decision-making processes, ultimately leading to the creation of equitable policies, practices, programs, and services for and by Black communities.

The BHEF can serve as a tool to address discriminatory policies and practices and ensure that the design and implementation of policies and programs center on the voices, empower, and address the unique housing needs of Black communities.

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

The BHEF is an opportunity for organizations to:

- Incorporate a comprehensive Black equity analysis across all decision-making processes, encompassing policies, funding, practices and programs
- Identify and address systemic issues to enable transformative change and well-informed decision-making
- Center Black communities in decision-making processes
- Enhance the housing sector's proficiency in utilizing Black equity analysis to evaluate pertinent issues and establish its full integration into decision-making processes
- Establish organizational, procedural frameworks to create strategies and implement actions that promote Black equity, foster equitable outcomes, and progressively cultivate a racially equitable housing environment for Black communities

The overarching goal of the BHEF is to address anti-Black racism and make equity intentional, rather than accidental.

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

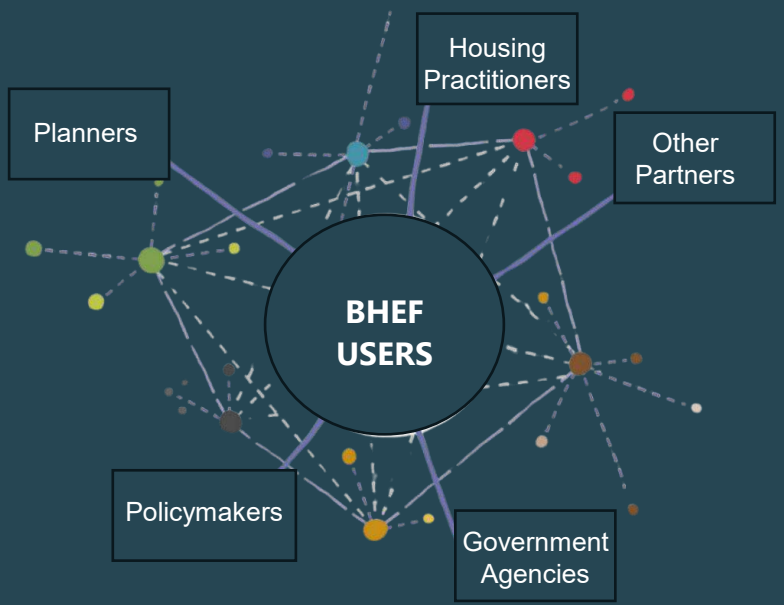
# WHY DO WE NEED A BHEF?

The BHEF acknowledges the historical legacies of slavery and colonization of Black Canadians and the African Diaspora. The framework recognizes the pervasive structural and systemic racism that predetermines the socioeconomic status of most Black Canadians and is maintained by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies (Multicultural Resource Center, 2023).

The BHEF also acknowledges the unique experiences and needs of Black communities, as well as the impacts of systemic racism and oppression that have continued to create inequities and housing exclusion for generations of Black Canadians. As a result of this legacy, anti-Black racism has been embedded in policies and practices, increasing the rate of housing insecurity experienced by Black people in Canada. Therefore, to address the prevalence of housing precarity faced by Black Canadians, it is crucial to raise our awareness, address these oppressive practices, and intentionally remove barriers to equitable housing for Black communities.

# WHO SHOULD USE THE BHEF?

Policymakers, government agencies, housing practitioners, planners, and other partners can utilize the BHEF to address systemic disparities in housing. By tailoring policies, analyzing funding decisions, creating culturally appropriate programs, and engaging with Black communities, these partners can promote equity and racial justice in the housing sector.




Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

The BHEF is a resource for promoting Black equity and access to housing. It can be particularly useful in situations where there are disparities in access to housing resources or opportunities based on race.

The BHEF can be utilized to revise, develop, analyze, plan and implement, and evaluate programs, policies, and practices as described below:

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# HOW SHOULD THE BHEF BE USED?

The BHEF is a valuable tool that provides guiding principles and operational questions to foster meaningful engagement with Black communities and assist in developing, implementing, and evaluating practices, policies, programs, and initiatives.

BHEF users navigate through three phases: Co-design, Co-implement, and Co-evaluate. Each phase includes a series of steps to ensure that planners, policymakers, and housing practitioners collaborate with the impacted community to jointly identify challenges, formulate strategies, and implement solutions that are both effective and equitable.

During the **Co-design phase**, partners engage in open conversations to grasp the community's specific needs and aspirations, ensuring that proposed interventions are culturally relevant and responsive.

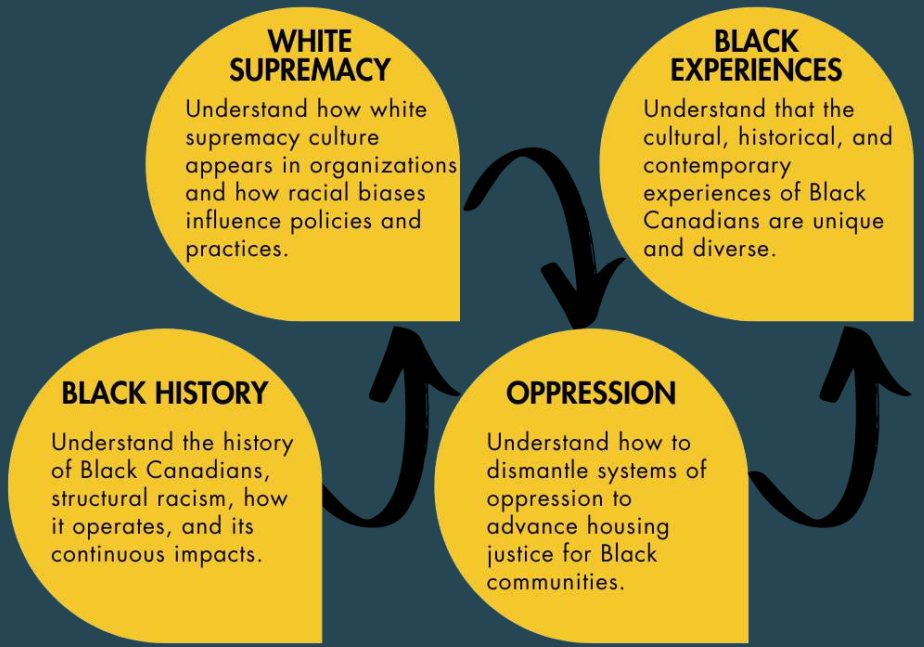
In the **Co-implement phase**, the focus shifts to action as community members take an active role in identifying and executing the strategies. This phase features regular check-ins and adjustments based on timely feedback from the community.

Lastly, the **Co-evaluate phase** thoroughly reviews outcomes, utilizing insights from community experiences. This reflective process assesses success and uncovers areas for improvement and lessons learned, contributing to a continuous cycle of growth and adaptation. Through this process, BHEF seeks to cultivate a sense of ownership and empowerment within Black communities, ensuring that policies and programs are genuinely transformative and aligned with their aspirations.

It's important to remember that the framework is evolving. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but a set of principles that can be adapted to meet the community’s specific needs.

# WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN USING THE BHEF

Before using the BHEF, it is critical to understand the following:




Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

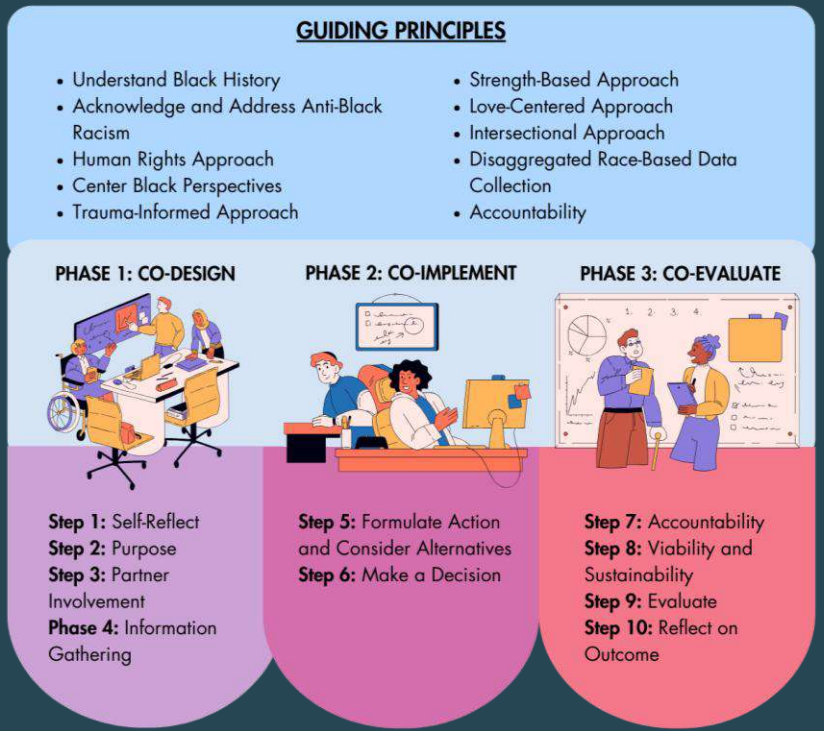
These understandings are important in considering a targeted response/decision based on the benefits and burdens of the varying identities that exist in Black communities.

# USING THE BHEF

# USING THE BHEF

Engaging with the BHEF is important to creating an equitable and inclusive housing landscape for Black communities. The framework consists of guiding principles and three phases to help with policy, program development, and decision-making processes.

Elements of the BHEF:

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# BHEF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles that define the value systems important to Black communities are rooted in a rich history of resilience, determination, and perseverance. These principles reflect the experiences, struggles, and triumphs of Black Canadians and are influenced by cultural, social, and political factors. They provide a framework for understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by Black communities, while also celebrating the strengths and contributions of Black Canadians.

Among the guiding principles are the acknowledgement of anti-Black racism, the promotion of equity and justice, the recognition of intersectionality, and the empowerment of Black voices and leadership.

By embracing these principles and working to uphold them, we can build resilient and inclusive communities that recognize and value Black Canadians.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #1: UNDERSTAND BLACK HISTORY

It is essential to recognize the contributions Black Canadians have made in Canada and acknowledge that Black Canadians have faced significant challenges with housing insecurity and social inequities that stem from Canada's colonial history of legalized slavery, dispossession, racial segregation, racism, and discrimination. In practice, it is crucial to consider the generational inequities that Black communities have endured. This requires implementing measures that actively address these disparities through funding, policies, programs, and services to promote equitable housing for Black communities.

A brief illustration of Black history:

Sources: The Canadian Encyclopedia (2024); Canadian Museum for Human Rights (2024); Henry (2021). Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #2: ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADDRESS ANTI-BLACK RACISM

The impact of anti-Black racism on Black communities is complex and far-reaching. It is crucial to recognize the different ways it appears, such as systemic racism, implicit bias, and microaggressions within housing policies and practices. By addressing this issue in organizations, we can work towards dismantling oppressive systems and promoting equitable housing opportunities for Black communities. In practical terms, this involves:

- Implementing comprehensive policies that emphasize diversity and inclusion at all organizational levels
- Conducting regular audits to ensure equitable treatment in housing and program applications
- Providing education and training on cultural competency to help staff identify and confront their own biases
- Collaborating with community leaders and advocacy groups to enhance efforts to create sustainable change within organizations

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #3: HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

International Human Rights Laws and the Canadian National Housing Strategy Act recognize access to adequate housing as a fundamental human right (National Right to Housing Network, 2023). The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Act are intended to guard against racial discrimination. Despite these efforts, there is an overrepresentation of Black Canadians facing homelessness [City of Toronto, 2018; BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2020), in core housing need (Randle et al., 2021) and experiencing housing discrimination (Center for Equality Rights in Accommodation, 2009). Addressing the housing inequities in Black communities must be approached from a human rights perspective by tackling housing discrimination in all forms and actively facilitating equitable access to housing for Black Canadians.

Sources: Scottish Human Rights (no date); Canadian Human Rights (2024); Government of Canada (2024). Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #4: ENGAGE AND CENTER BLACK VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES (CENTER BLACK PERSPECTIVES)

Black Canadians have endured a long history of neglect and discrimination within the housing sector. The idea of Black perspective and Black centering, rooted in Afrocentrism, offers a framework for understanding and analyzing the world through the lens of Black individuals (Asante, 1991). This approach emphasizes the importance of their lived experiences and viewpoints to collaboratively co-create diverse spaces and co-develop more accurate, inclusive housing policies and programs.

In practice, this involves prioritizing and validating the experiences of Black communities, which helps to illuminate the effects of racism, discrimination, and inequities on these communities, ultimately striving for a more equitable society where Black communities thrive.

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #5: TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The far-reaching consequences of historical and contemporary systemic racism, discrimination, and violence have had a deep-seated effect on Black individuals and communities. Given this reality, organizations must implement a culturally sensitive trauma-informed approach that recognizes and addresses the effects of trauma within Black communities.

By embracing such an approach, we can work towards creating an equitable housing system that nurtures the overall well-being of Black communities. This ensures that housing policies and practices are founded on empathy, understanding, and respect for the lived experiences of Black individuals. Additionally, it requires training staff to identify signs of trauma and offering resources that promote healing and resilience.

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #6: STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

The strength-based approach to addressing Black housing inequities focuses on identifying and utilizing the strengths and resources within Black communities to address housing disparities. This approach recognizes that Black communities have a rich history of resilience and self-determination and that these strengths can be leveraged to create sustainable solutions to housing inequities.

Pulla and Francis (2015) present essential principles for strength-based practices that organizations can implement and utilize when engaging with Black communities. The following diagram outlines these principles:

Pulla and Francis (2015)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #7: LOVE-CENTERED APPROACH

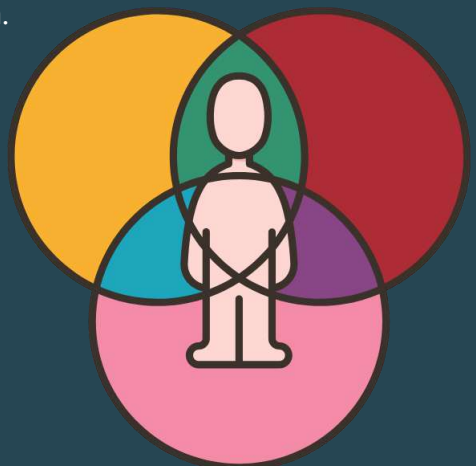
When it comes to addressing the struggles faced by Black communities, a love-centered approach can be incredibly effective. These struggles are often rooted in systemic oppression and historical trauma, making it crucial to approach the issue with empathy and understanding. Ultimately, a love-centered approach recognizes that we are all interconnected and that the well-being of one group is tied to the well-being of all. By approaching the struggles faced by Black communities with empathy, understanding, compassion, and a commitment to building relationships and community, we can create an equitable housing landscape for Black communities.

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #8: INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

An intersectional approach considers the historical, social and political context, and recognizes the individual's unique experience based on the intersection of identities (Crenshaw, 1995). This concept holds particular significance within Black communities, where Black people often face multiple forms of oppression based on gender, race, sexuality, class, and other factors. Consider the example of a Black transgender single parent who is low-income. This individual may struggle to find affordable housing in areas with good schools and job opportunities, as they may face discrimination based on gender identity, race, and income. This highlights the need for an intersectional approach to better understand social inequities and the processes that cause and maintain them (Gillborn, 2015).

Integrating an intersectional perspective into policy development makes it apparent that individuals may interact with these policies in distinctive ways shaped by their identities. Hence, it is essential to tailor policies and practices to effectively address Black communities' diverse needs and identities, rather than relying on uniform strategies in program and policy design.



Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #9: COLLECT DISAGGREGATED RACE-BASED DATA

Historically, the experiences of Black communities have often been overlooked and insufficiently researched across various sectors. Unfortunately, this practice continues, and it is viewed as discriminatory, leading to the erasure and harm of these communities. To address the housing injustices Black communities face, collecting and analyzing disaggregated race-based data is essential, as it can reveal disparities within Black communities and offer valuable insights for shaping effective policies and practices.

In practical terms, this includes:

- Emphasizing culturally appropriate and inclusive research methods that actively seek to incorporate the diverse voices and experiences of Black communities
- Investing in partnerships and collaborations that build trust and encourage community engagement and participation
- Funding collaborations with Black community leaders and members to develop research agendas focused on their specific needs and challenges
- Allocating resources for training and capacity-building initiatives to empower Black communities to engage actively in research processes
- Ensuring that data is utilized ethically and responsibly to foster positive change

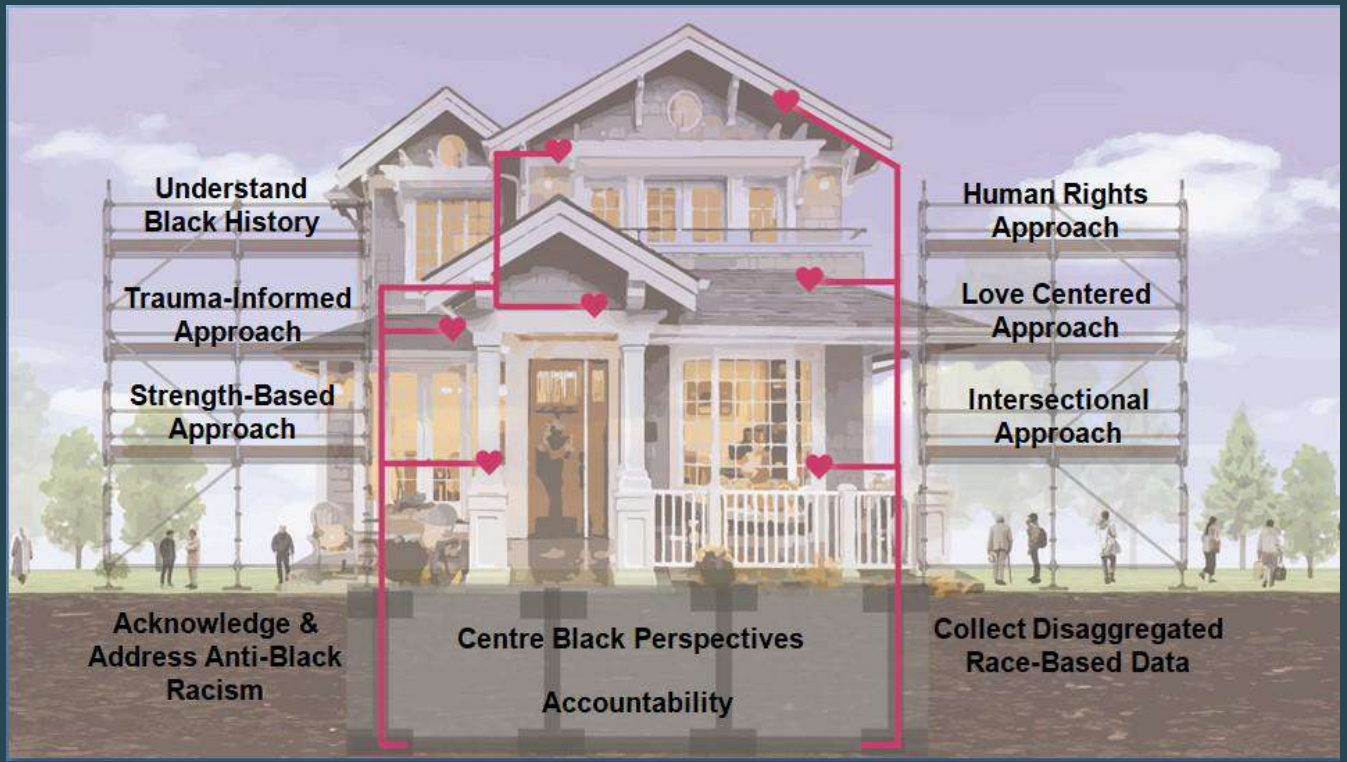
Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# GUIDING PRINCIPLE #10: ACCOUNTABILITY

Ensuring access to adequate housing for Black communities requires accountability. This means that planners, policymakers, government entities, and housing agencies must take responsibility for developing policies that address the underlying causes of disparities. Establishing measurable metrics to assess policy effectiveness in combating housing injustices is essential to dismantling oppressive systems and addressing anti-Black racism embedded in current policies and practices.

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

The principles outlined herein reflect the fundamental values of Black communities, offering a pivotal avenue to confront enduring housing disparities. Recognizing and embracing the significance of these principles and striving to implement them are vital steps toward overcoming systemic obstacles and fostering equitable housing opportunities for Black communities.

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# APPLYING THE BHEF

# APPLYING THE BHEF

While using this framework, you might encounter questions that do not seem relevant to your purpose. In such cases, feel free to modify the questions to suit the needs of the community. However, ensure the framework's core principles are maintained while adapting it to suit the community's objectives.

Please note that this framework is not a rigid set of rules, but a dynamic starting point. It is a roadmap that evolves with you and the community, guiding you in addressing the systemic barriers ingrained in policies and practices that impede equitable housing for Black communities.

The BHEF is designed to assist in developing and implementing policies, programs, services, and practice changes. It identifies three focus areas (co-design, co-implement, and co-evaluate) to provide guidance and structure to foster meaningful collaboration with Black communities.

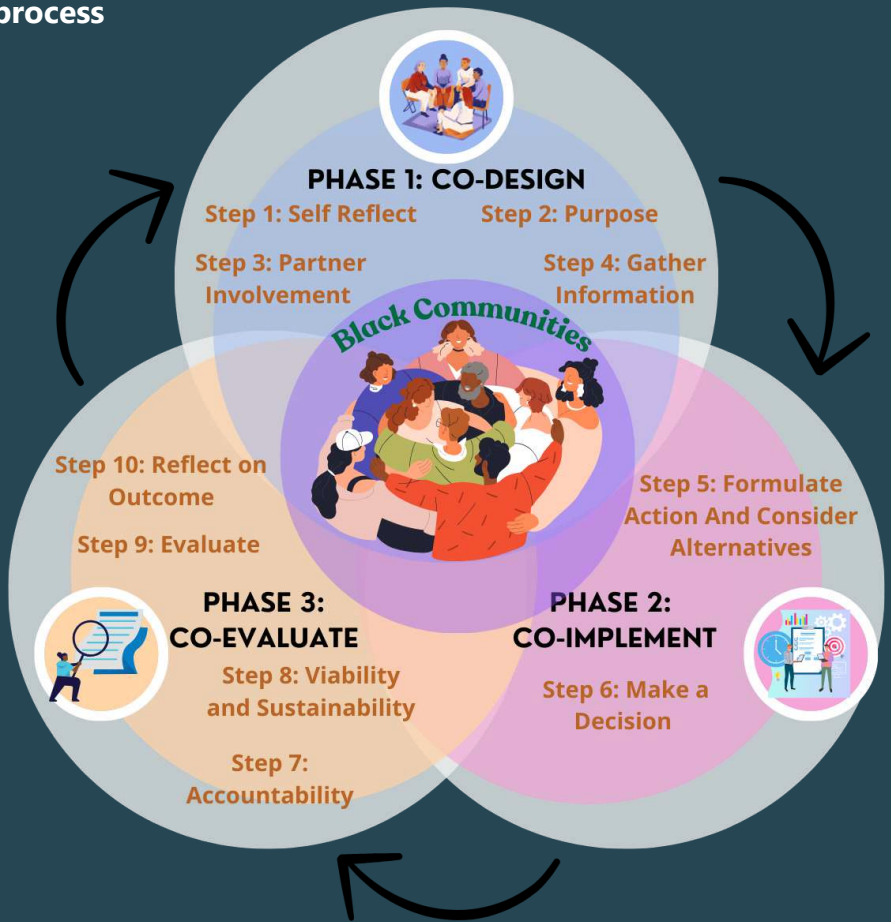
# THREE PHASES OF FOCUS

**BHEF Phases: Illustrating an iterative process**

**Phase One:** Co-Design

**Phase Two:** Co-Implement

**Phase Three:** Co-Evaluate




Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# PHASE ONE: CO-DESIGN

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# PHASE ONE: CO-DESIGN

Co-design approaches are gaining popularity across various fields, acknowledging the importance of collaborative design processes. In contrast to traditional design methods where designers are experts and users provide research, co-design shifts the power dynamics, roles, and responsibilities among participants (Calvo & Sclater, 2021). According to Calvo and Sclater (2021), co-design combines different areas of expertise, altering the conventional power dynamics in design. Rizzo (2010) encourages designers to engage users as active collaborators throughout all stages, enabling direct integration of their experiences and insights into the design and decision-making process.

In the **CO-DESIGN** phase, you will collaborate with the community to revise, develop, analyze, plan, implement, or evaluate the policy, program, service, or practice. This entails engaging in open dialogues with Black communities to understand their unique needs and aspirations. Active listening and teamwork will ensure that their voices are acknowledged, valued, and acted upon. By cultivating an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and understanding, you will co-design solutions that address the community's needs.

**Step 1: Self-Reflection**

This step invites BHEF users to critically analyze their personal filters and worldviews. It's worth noting that even individuals of colour may have been conditioned by colonial institutions during their education and training, which can impact their perspectives. Before implementing the BHEF, it is advisable to pause and reflect on one's perspective, the narratives of Black people imparted through socialization, any biases present, any presumptions held, and the systemic inequities that exist in our society. By doing so, you can better understand how these elements contribute to your perspective, experiences, and interactions within your professional and social environments and decision-making process. Additionally, recognizing and acknowledging the impact of your privilege and power can help you be more effective in promoting equity, inclusion and belonging.

These questions may help your reflection process:

1. How might your role, racial identity, other identities, privileges or positional power* connect to anti-Black racism in housing? What aspects of your position (socially and professionally) should you keep in mind as you move through this process?

2. How might internalized racial superiority,** internalized racism, or bias be present for you?

3. How have your organization's policies and practices (both historical and current) contributed to the inequities Black communities face? How might the policies and practices be reinforcing White supremacy culture, power imbalances, or racial inequities in Black communities?

4. What support do you need to address anti-Black racism, privilege, and power imbalances within your organization based on your role and racial identity?

5. What areas would you like to build your knowledge in, such as structural anti-Black racism, culturally appropriate community engagement strategies, and power dynamics?

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***Positional power** is based on organizational structure and decision-making mechanisms (Van den Brink & Steffen, 2007). It grants power based on an individual's rank (Meiners, 2024).

****Internalized racial superiority** involves accepting and embodying a superior racial identity rooted in the historical designation of one's race (Seattle Government, no date).

**Step 2: Purpose**

In this step, you will work with the impacted community to **co-initiate** the project and its purpose. This collaborative process ensures that the voices and perspectives of those directly affected are central to identifying the policy, program, service, or practice you want to develop or revise to address their housing needs. The project you are collaborating on will be described as "the initiative" in this framework.

**Initiative Name:** (Enter the name of the initiative)

1. Is the initiative a:
    - ❑ Policy
    - ❑ Program/Service
    - ❑ Procedure
    - ❑ Practice
    - ❑ Project
    - ❑ Funding Decision
    - ❑ Other

2. What is the current phase of the initiative?
    - ❑ Conceptual
    - ❑ Consultation

- ❑ Development
- ❑ Implementation
- ❑ Review/Revision
- ❑ Evaluation

3. What is the intended outcome of the initiative? (For instance, developing a policy to facilitate access to housing or implementing a culturally appropriate housing support program).

4. Do you have a well-defined reason and need for the initiative? Is this initiated in response to a community's needs, organizational change, etc.? Ensure an understanding of the historical and current inequities impacting the targeted community.

**Step 3: Partner Involvement**

***Nothing About Us – Without Us***

When engaging with Black communities, it is important to recognize that they are not a homogenous group. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that representation is diverse and inclusive of Black people from various intersections. By engaging with the communities affected by decisions, we can ensure that their needs are addressed and strive towards better outcomes. At this juncture, it is recommended to formally set up a community advisory committee or a similar group with representatives from the community to guide the entire initiative process. You will work with the community advisory committee to engage the broader community throughout the process.

Before filling out this section, it is crucial to consider how you can prioritize centering Black communities' voices and perspectives, and the budget and time required to achieve this.

To ensure accessible, inclusive, and culturally appropriate engagement, it is essential to account for budgetary considerations such as facilitated focus groups, targeted outreach, translation or interpretation services, adequate honoraria, meals, transportation, child-minding, and administrative costs for surveys, etc. (City of London, 2022). It is equally important to allocate sufficient time and resources to cultivate relationships with the community before initiating community engagement.

It is highly recommended that you ask the community for their preferred engagement strategy. At this stage, consider engaging additional partners, such as organizations serving Black communities.

These questions are designed to assist you in preparing for community engagement:

1. What specific groups within Black communities would be affected by this initiative? (For instance, if the initiative focuses on addressing housing issues and vulnerability within Black communities, provide a list of the different groups impacted, such as women, children, LGBTQ2S+ community, men, people experiencing mental health challenges, those who are unhoused, people fleeing violence, etc.).

2. What plans do you have to meaningfully collaborate with the impacted groups, incorporating their knowledge and expertise?
    a. Do the initiative recipients have any agency in the planning and executing of the initiative?

3. Has adequate time been allocated to incorporate all voices meaningfully into this initiative?

4. Is the initiative transparent enough for the Black communities affected by it?
    a. Are there any resource or political implications? If so, ensure that they are clearly communicated and understood.

5. Are non-academic and non-bureaucratic language, multimedia, and alternate formats being used to communicate with communities in accessible ways?
    a. Is information about the initiative effectively communicated in languages and tones representative of Black communities?
    b. Are culturally appropriate, respectful, inclusive, and relevant images used to promote or advertise the initiative?

6. Have you made adequate preparations for engaging with the community?
    a. What areas do you feel unprepared in?
    b. How can subject matter experts or training be utilized for better preparation?

**Step 4: Information Gathering**

When developing the initiative, carefully consider the information and data you rely on, beyond your interactions with the community. It is crucial to keep in mind that limited data is available on the housing experiences of Black communities. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you don't rely solely on existing data, but also prioritize direct engagement with the community members, as outlined in Step 3, to ensure an accurate and comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

Below are some questions to consider as you supplement the information gathered in Step 3 and gather more information.

These questions are designed to assist you in gathering information:

1. What data sources inform your understanding of the experiences of the target population? (For instance, census data, client/staff feedback, point-in-time count, research report, program evaluation, organizational survey, etc.).

2. Is there enough data to guide the initiative's development? What information is lacking, and how can we fill in the gaps?

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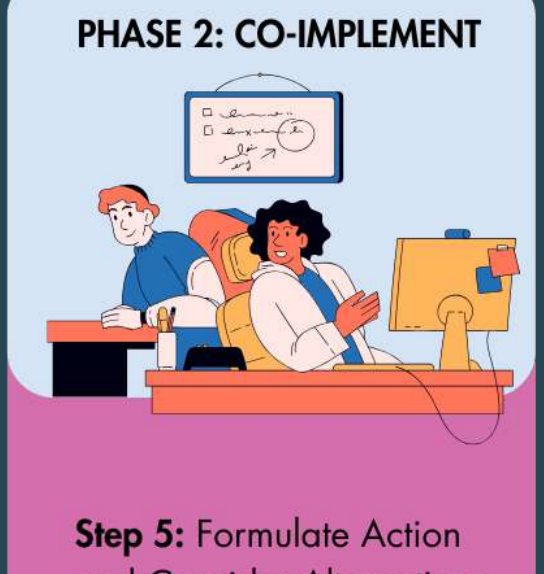
# PHASE TWO: CO-IMPLEMENT

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# PHASE TWO: CO-IMPLEMENT

Once you have completed steps 1 to 4, you can use the information collected to create a plan of action —this is the CO-IMPLEMENT phase. Co-implementation involves collaborating with community members and organizational partners to bring the solution to life (Clever Cities, no date). This process means engaging individuals, particularly those with lived and living experiences, in identifying the most suitable initiative, and developing and delivering the co-designed solution.

**Step 5: Formulate Action and Consider Alternatives**

The following questions have been carefully developed to help guide and support you and the community in creating a community-driven initiative.

1. How might the decision affect the target population(s)? How might they perceive it?

2. Does the initiative/decision improve, worsen, or make no change to existing disparities?
    a. Does it result in systemic change that addresses these disparities?
        i. If not, have you considered alternative initiatives to address disparities and meet the needs?
    b. Are there other initiatives that have been developed to address similar issues, and if so, what can you learn from them?

3. What might be some adverse impacts or unintended consequences resulting from this decision that you want to address?

4. Is the initiative open to change to meet the impacted communities' historical, current and emerging needs?
    a. Did you consider this initiative's short and long-term impacts?

5. What ideas did you brainstorm to address and disrupt discriminatory patterns, policies, and practices that reinforce current or cumulative inequities in Black communities?
    a. How will these improvements be implemented in the initiative?

6. What were some of the themes that emerged when using the framework?
    a. What do you want to ensure you pay attention to in formulating and implementing the decision?

7. As a result of what you have learned through research and community engagement, what needs to change?
    a. What are the possible revisions to the initiative?
    b. How will you achieve that change?

**Step 6: Make a Decision**

Once you understand the community's needs, you can begin to develop an initiative that addresses those needs with the community. Be sure to pay attention to how power dynamics, racial identities, privilege, and positional power on the team may have influenced the decision. By considering these factors, you can ensure that the initiative is tailored to meet the community's specific needs while accounting for any potential biases or power dynamics that may have influenced previous decisions.

It is crucial to approach this process carefully to ensure the outcome is effective and equitable.

These questions can assist you:

1. Before making a decision, have you considered how your own power and privilege might influence it?

2. Have you ensured that power dynamics have been flattened in the decision-making process so that everyone's voice is heard, especially the impacted community?

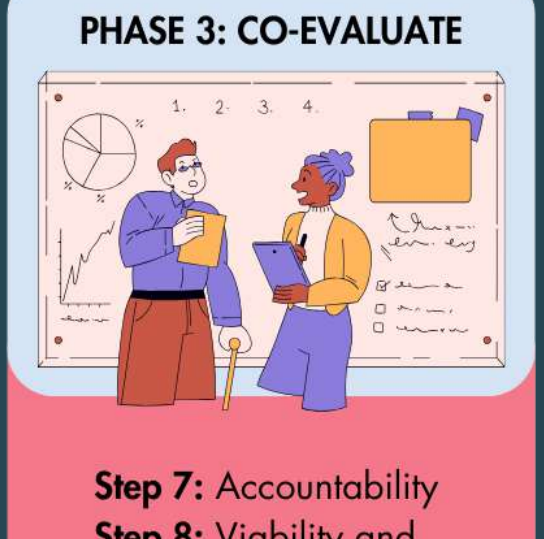
3. Did you do a process check to ensure the community's voices were centered and the decision incorporated their perspectives? Have all concerns been expressed and addressed by everyone involved in the decision-making process?

4. Does the decision challenge and dismantle systemic anti-Black racism and other barriers facing the target population?
    a. What are the specific ways this decision is expected to reduce disparities and advance social justice?

5. Is the initiative realistic and adequately funded, with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and/or enforcement?
    a. Are there additional resources needed to implement this decision?

In the context of decision-making, it is imperative to consider the aspects that demand proactive attention, and interruption. These factors may vary depending on the specific circumstances surrounding the decision. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of such factors would be indispensable for informed decision-making.

# PHASE THREE: CO-EVALUATE



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# PHASE THREE: CO-EVALUATE

After completing the **CO-DESIGN** and **CO-IMPLEMENT** phases, the framework's last phase involves **CO-EVALUATING** the initiative's effectiveness. According to Pires (2019), co-evaluation is "a coordinated, collaborative assessment of a shared project or initiative" (pg. 25). Co-evaluation is an important step in this process as it ensures that all partners have a voice in assessing the outcomes and successes of the initiative. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership among participants and provides a holistic view of the project's impact. By engaging in co-evaluation with the impacted community, teams can identify areas for improvement, celebrate achievements, and make informed decisions for future projects.

**Step 7: Accountability**

Accountability is a vital component of this process for several reasons. Firstly, it fosters transparency and honesty, ensuring the initiative achieves its intended outcome. In cases where it does not, a process should be in place to address it. Secondly, accountability cultivates a sense of responsibility, which is critical for building meaningful relationships and fostering trust with Black communities. Lastly, the potential impact of this initiative on Black communities is immense, and your role in it demonstrates your commitment to dismantling barriers to equitable housing and promoting positive outcomes for Black communities.

These carefully crafted questions are here to guide and support you when co-evaluating the initiative.

1. Are there provisions to ensure ongoing data collection, reporting, partner participation, and government/non-profit accountability?

2. How is accountability measured? What data is collected to monitor the initiative's implementation and impact?

3. What information needs to be communicated to the entire organization (or specific groups) that you uncovered regarding racial inequities, White supremacy culture, and power imbalances that will need to be addressed as you move forward on your racial equity change process?
    a. How will you communicate this?
    b. Who will communicate it?
    c. By when?

4. What inclusive strategies are in place to ensure continuous engagement with the community and improvement of the initiative? Your active participation and feedback are crucial in this process.
    a. Do you deliberately allocate time or create channels that allow individuals to provide feedback or register complaints?

**Step 8: Viability and Sustainability**

Ensuring viability and sustainability in implementing initiatives is crucial because it helps maximize the initiative's benefits and minimize its negative impacts in the long run. Viability refers to the ability of an initiative to be realistic, successfully implemented and achieve its intended outcomes (Government UK, 2014). Sustainability refers to the ability of the policy to be maintained over time (Mashego, 2018) without causing harm to Black communities. An initiative that is not viable may fail to achieve its

intended results or may be implemented in a way that causes unintended negative consequences. Therefore, planners, policymakers, and housing practitioners should ensure their initiatives are viable and sustainable. This can be achieved by conducting a rigorous analysis of the initiative's potential impacts, engaging partners in the process, and considering the long-term effects on Black communities. By doing so, policymakers and housing practitioners can ensure that their initiatives are effective, efficient, and equitable and can contribute to the overall well-being of Black communities.

To ensure viability and sustainability, you may want to consider the following questions:

1. How are you building ongoing capacity for involvement with Black communities most affected by inequities?

2. Does the initiative include ongoing checks, continuous improvement, and flexibility based on community feedback?

3. Is the initiative sustainable over time and adaptable to the changing needs of the Black communities?
    a. What are your plans to revisit this initiative to ensure equitable outcomes?

4. What resources do you have to ensure the initiative achieves its intended outcome(s) (e.g., budget, staff, etc.)?
    a. What strategies will be used to ensure this initiative continues to have the intended impact(s)/outcome(s)?

**Step 9: Evaluate**

Using the BHEF to measure outcomes involves centering Black individuals' and communities' experiences and perspectives in the evaluation process. This approach recognizes that traditional evaluation methods often fail to capture the challenges and nuances of systemic racism and other forms of oppression that Black communities face.

One way to incorporate the BHEF is to use culturally responsive evaluation techniques, such as participatory evaluation,* which involves engaging Black partners in the evaluation process. This can help ensure that the evaluation process is culturally responsive and that the evaluation questions are relevant to Black individuals and communities.

Another key aspect of using the BHEF is to examine outcomes through an equity lens. To evaluate outcomes using this framework, it is crucial to grasp the principles on which it is based. This involves understanding how outcomes vary by gender, age, abilities, and other demographic factors and recognizing how systemic racism and other forms of oppression may contribute to these disparities – keep intersectionality in mind. Typically, the BHEF considers metrics such as access to affordable housing, reduced barriers to accessing services, culturally responsive housing and services, improved disaggregated race-based data collection, etc.

*According to Zukoski & Luluquisen (2002), "participatory evaluation is a partnership approach to evaluation in which stakeholders actively engage in developing the evaluation and all phases of its implementation" (p. 1).

To measure outcomes using this framework, you may want to consider the following indicators:

1. **Access to affordable housing:** You can measure this by examining the percentage of Black rental households that spend more than 30% of their before-tax income on housing.

2. **Access to culturally appropriate services:** You can measure this by examining the number of culturally appropriate programs and services available within an organization and its ability to meet the needs of Black communities.

3. **Disaggregated race-based data collection:** You can measure this by collecting and analyzing disaggregated race-based data to identify disparities within Black communities accessing affordable housing.

Using these indicators as a starting point, you can identify the root causes of these disparities, evaluate the impact of housing policies and programs on Black communities, and make adjustments to ensure they are equitable and inclusive.

**Step 10: Reflect on the Outcome**

After applying the BHEF and implementing the initiative, it is imperative to undertake a retrospective analysis of its impact on the target community. This will enable a comprehensive understanding of the initiative's effectiveness and assist in determining whether the intended goals were achieved.

1. Did the application of the framework work with the initiative?

2. After applying the framework, will you advocate for any other systemic changes, such as policy recommendations or procedure changes, within the housing sector and across other sectors?

3. What assumptions and/or biases were uncovered through this process that will need to be addressed so they don't continue to cause harm?
    a. How will you do this?

4. What unexpected obstacles did you face?
    a. How would you approach them differently in the future?

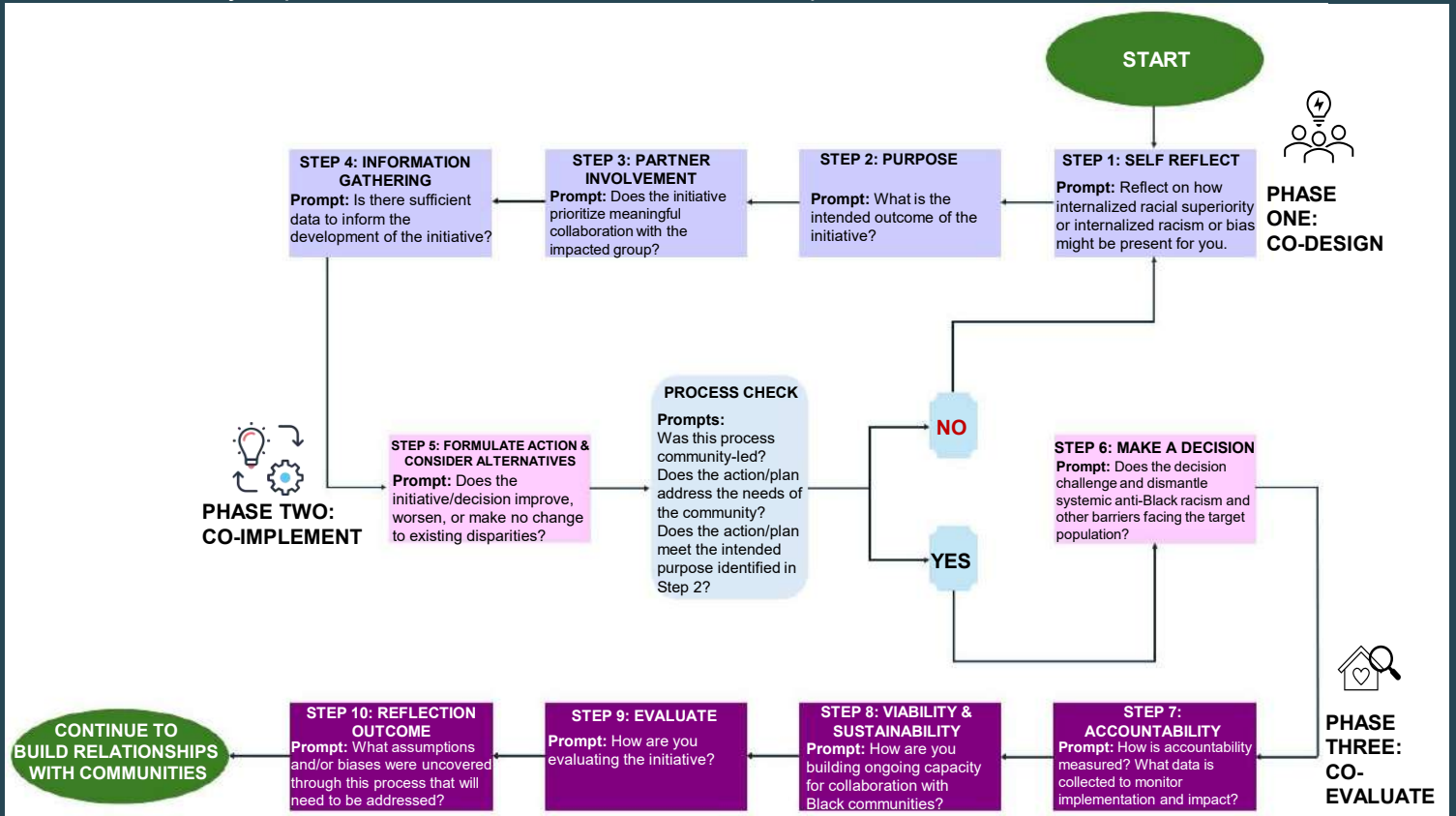
5. What are the barriers to equitable housing outcomes for Black communities? What have you learned about effective practices that can be implemented in future initiatives?

6. What insights have you gained from this experience?

7. Do you have any further reflections on this process or the changes implemented in the initiative?

# BHEF PROCESS FLOW: APPLYING THE PHASES

The flowchart guides on implementing the phases of the BHEF. However, it should be adapted to meet the community's specific needs and must not be a linear process.

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# ETHOS AND COMPETENCIES

# ETHOS AND COMPETENCIES

Implementing the BHEF necessitates a fundamental change in mindset and professional practice principles. It mandates prioritizing specific ethos when engaging with Black communities to deconstruct systemic housing barriers and establish equitable policies and practices. The doctoral research underscores the pervasive nature of systemic anti-Black racism, often imperceptible to those unaffected by it. This ingrained issue surfaces across various organizational levels and roles, from leadership to frontline positions. Therefore, successful implementation of the BHEF demands specific ethos and competencies tailored to the diverse roles within organizations.

In Canada, there is a lack of substantial research on applying equity frameworks within the housing sector to address the specific challenges faced by Black communities. To fill this gap, Indigenous equity frameworks, such as the Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework (Government of Alberta, 2019), were used as templates, along with input from research contributors.

This section describes the levels of racism and delineates several crucial principles and skills that should be incorporated to reshape organizational policies and practices, fostering favourable outcomes for Black communities. By implementing these changes, we can begin to address the systemic barriers that have long hindered the progress and well-being of Black communities, emphasizing the urgency and importance of this work.

Ethos refers to the fundamental character of a group or an individual, encompassing their beliefs, guiding principles that shape their conduct, and their perception of right and wrong behaviour. It encapsulates organizations' and individuals' character, credibility, and moral compass (Study.com, 2024).

# LEVELS OF RACISM

The BHEF acknowledges the pervasive and insidious nature of anti-Black racism in the housing sector and other related sectors affecting the housing stability of Black Canadians. It provides a strategy to address the deeply ingrained discriminatory ideologies.

Since racism exists on multiple levels — internalized, interpersonal, institutional/systemic, and structural — the framework underscores the need to bring about changes at these different levels.

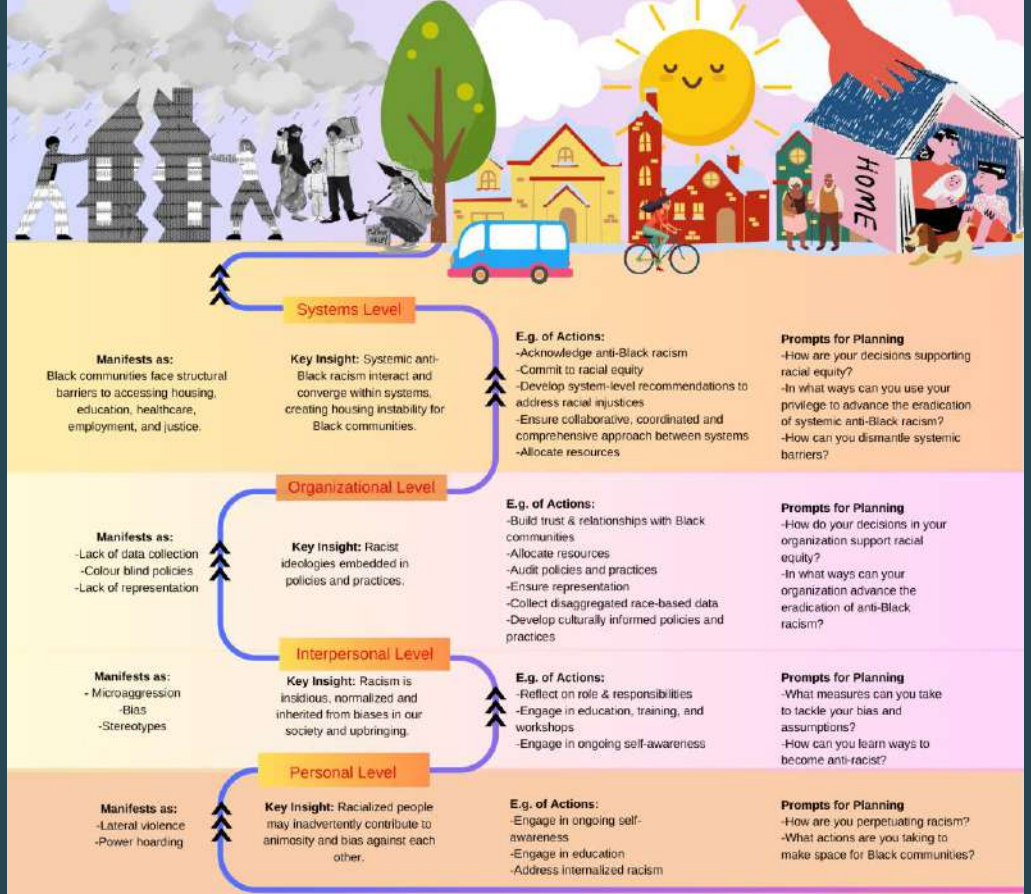
The diagram depicts the different levels at which racism occurs.

Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (no date). Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM

The diagram illustrates the different levels at which racism may exist in organizations, how it manifests at each level, key insights from the doctoral research, examples of actions to take, and prompts to assist practitioners in addressing racism.

The diagram also recognizes racism at personal (internalized racism), interpersonal (between client and staff or among staff/clients), organizational/institutional (within housing organizations), and systemic (across all sectors such as justice, education, child and family services) levels.

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# ETHOS AND COMPETENCIES FOR PLANNERS, POLICYMAKERS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The following delineates several instances of important principles and skills that should be incorporated to reshape organizational policies and procedures, fostering favourable outcomes for Black communities.

| ETHOS | KNOWING | DOING | BEING | OUTCOMES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge of Black History & Center Black Perspectives | Demonstrates an understanding of the cultural context and the impacts of historical events, policies, and practices, along with their significance in addressing current issues, barriers, and opportunities. | Collaborates meaningfully and closely with Black communities to attain shared outcomes. | Engage in ongoing education regarding Black communities, their culture, lived experiences, and barriers while also advocating for others to do the same. | Knowledge of the devastating effects of racial inequities and housing injustices on Black communities and how to combat this. |
| Understanding of Systemic Anti-Black Racism & Human-Rights Approach | Comprehends government policies' potential unintended consequences or disproportionate effects on Black communities. | Addresses the challenges related to systems and structural barriers. | Demonstrates a commitment to addressing issues by fostering personal behavioural changes and advocating against misinformation. | Awareness of how to develop policies and practices rooted in anti-racism and anti-oppression to facilitate housing access. |
| Center Black Perspectives & Intersectional Approach | Possesses an understanding of Black communities and the nuances involved in engaging with them in a respectful manner. | Identifies issues and formulates strategies to enact policy changes. | Incorporates an intersectional Black perspective into policies and practices. | Enhanced relationships and increased trust with Black communities. |
| Collect Disaggregated Race-Based Data | Acknowledges the deficiency in data collection and recognizes the importance of comprehending Black experiences. | Engages in gathering evidence from diverse sources, leveraging knowledge, networks, and consultations for effective policy development. | Recognizes the necessity of continuous data collection to guide policy development and decision-making processes. | Enhanced policies and practices informed by data that effectively address the needs of Black communities. |

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# ETHOS AND COMPETENCIES FOR HOUSING AGENCIES: DECISION-MAKERS

| ETHOS | KNOWING | DOING | BEING | OUTCOMES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge of Black History | Demonstrates an understanding of the cultural context and the impacts of historical events, policies, and practices, along with their significance in addressing current issues, barriers, and opportunities. | Exemplifies inclusive behaviours, addresses challenges, and promptly handles inappropriate behaviour, attitudes, and bias. | Engage in ongoing education regarding Black communities, their culture, lived experiences, and barriers while advocating for others to do the same. | Amplified and elevated Black voices reflected in policies and practices. |
| Centering on the Voices and Perspectives of Black Communities | Recognizes the sources of knowledge and information held within Black employees, networks and Black communities. | Collaborates meaningfully and closely with Black communities to attain shared outcomes. | Demonstrates a genuine and respectful interest in Black communities. | Enhanced relationships and increased trust with Black communities. |
| Understanding of Anti-Black Racism | Recognizes the wider impact of organizational policies and practices on Black communities. | Identifies issues and formulates culturally appropriate strategies to implement changes in policies and practices. | Is well-informed and conducts thorough observations to comprehend the fundamental dynamics influencing the issues at hand. | Dismantled systems of oppression and marginalization. |
| Relationship-Centered Approach | Demonstrates an understanding of the structural and systemic barriers to achieving shared outcomes. | Clearly communicates expectations regarding cultural awareness and understanding. | Demonstrates allyship through personal behaviour, speaks up when misinformation is stated by others, and addresses systemic and structural barriers. | Enhanced policies and practices that effectively address the needs of Black communities. |

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# ETHOS AND COMPETENCIES FOR HOUSING PRACTITIONERS: PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY

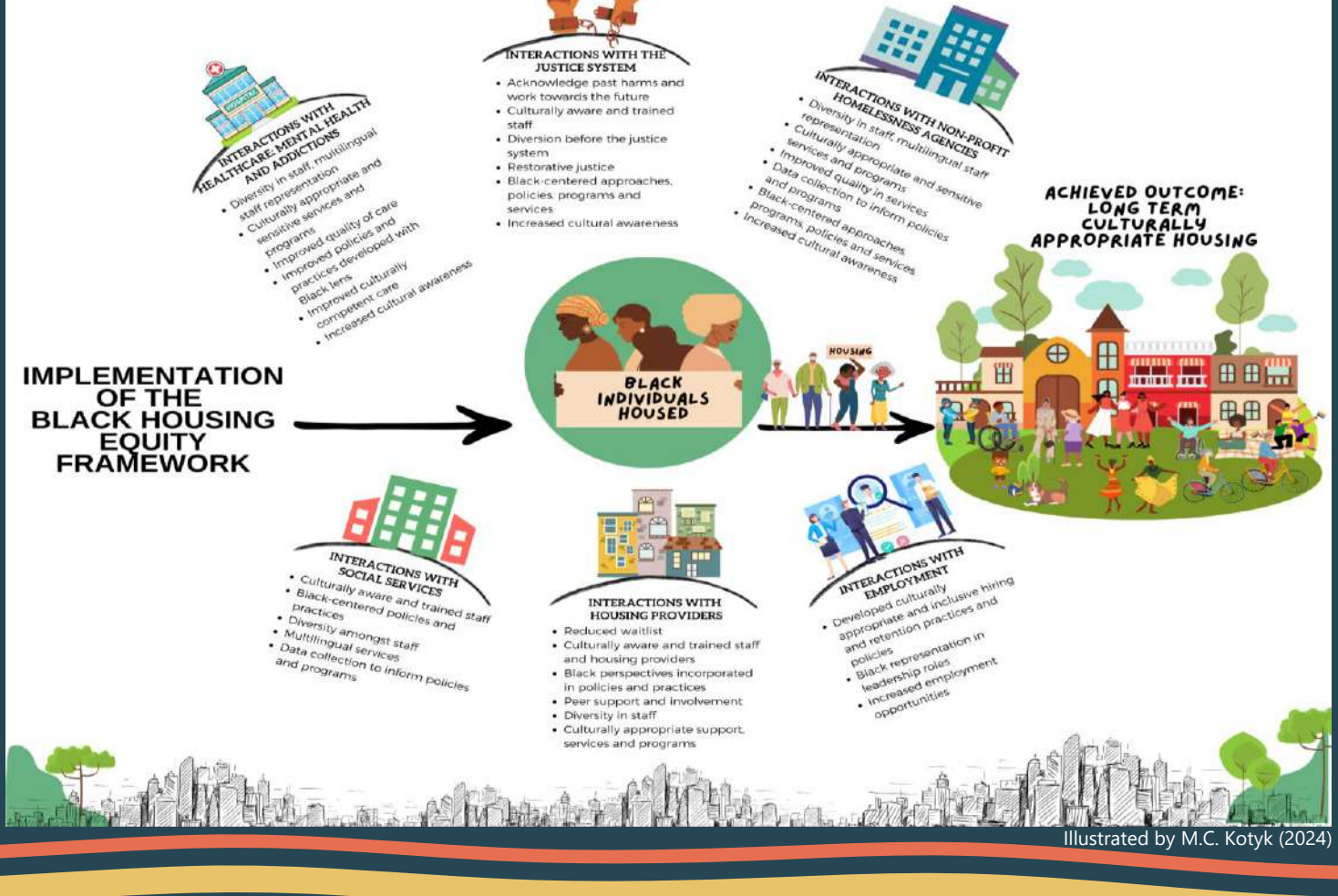
| ETHOS | KNOWING | DOING | BEING | OUTCOMES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding of Anti-Black Racism & Intersectional Approach | Demonstrates an understanding of the challenges that impact Black communities | Consults Black communities in a meaningful manner to formulate and execute strategies. | Engages in ongoing education regarding Black communities, their culture, lived experiences, and barriers while also advocating for others to do the same. | Awareness of how to develop policies and practices rooted in anti-racism and anti-oppression. |
| Knowledge of Black History & Trauma-Informed Approach | Possesses an understanding of the cultural and historical context of Black communities and its implications for program delivery. | Applies appropriate flexibility in program and service delivery to meet the specific cultural needs of Black communities. | Collaborates with other agencies and partners to deliver programs aimed at achieving impactful outcomes. | Improved culturally appropriate supports and programs for Black communities. |
| Centering on the Voices and Perspectives of Black Communities | Recognizes the significance of delivering culturally relevant services to Black communities. | Consistently engaging and actively involving Black community partners in program delivery and advocacy. | Is adaptable and consistently tailors approaches to develop culturally suitable solutions. | Built capacity and empowerment of Black communities to engage in decision-making processes. |
| Trauma-Informed Approach & Love-Centered Approach | Understands the impact of racial trauma and its manifestations. | Provides a safe interpersonal environment by listening and showing a respectful interest in culture, past experiences, and personal circumstances. | Exhibits respect and maintains a professional and caring demeanour when engaging with Black communities in program and service delivery. | Enhanced relationships and increased trust with Black communities. |

Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# PATHWAYS FORWARD

While the BHEF is designed to address anti-Black racism in the housing sector, its creation alone cannot guarantee meaningful structural changes. However, when utilized by planners, policymakers, practitioners, and other partners across sectors, who are dedicated to tackling anti-Black racism head-on, and engage in on-going critical thinking, deep reflexivity, continuous learning and unlearning, and strategic action, it can serve as an invaluable tool for facilitating equitable housing opportunities for Black communities.

The diagram on the next page illustrates the potential impact of the BHEF in the housing sector and other related sectors.




Illustrated by M.C. Kotyk (2024)

# BHEF AT A GLANCE

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# CONCLUSION

The BHEF has been developed through input gathered from precedent equity frameworks, key informants, Black people with lived/living experiences, collaborative partners within the community, and the author's extensive professional experience in the field.

Designed as a living document, the BHEF offers guidance to policymakers and housing practitioners in their endeavours to address discriminatory policies and practices, fostering housing justice and equitable support and services for Black communities. While not a definitive solution to eradicate anti-Black racism, it serves as a valuable tool to enhance awareness regarding the detrimental effects of discriminatory policies and practices on Black communities.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Marie Cecile Kotyk is a social planner and housing practitioner with over 15 years of experience in the public and non-profit sectors. She specializes in designing and managing community development projects and conducting community-based research to address spatial inequities in the built environment.

Throughout her career, she has spearheaded numerous significant housing and homelessness projects by effectively collaborating with various partners, including government officials, private and public organizations, non-profit organizations, Indigenous groups, Black communities, and individuals with lived/living experiences.

An accomplished academic, Dr. Kotyk earned her Human Ecology and Master's of City Planning degrees from the University of Manitoba and a Doctor of Design degree from the University of Calgary.

She is the founder of Kotyk Consulting, and an assistant professor and design justice research chair at the University of Calgary's School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape Architecture.

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