



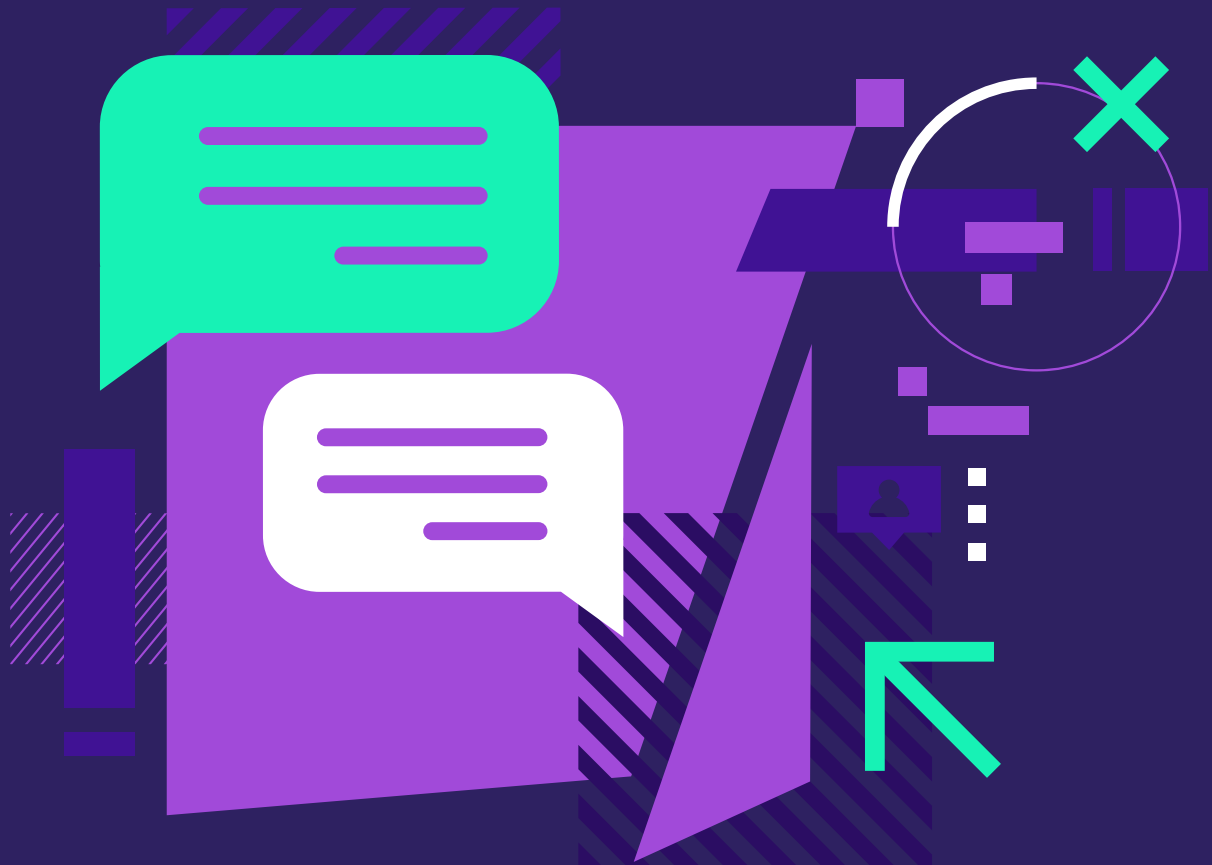
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SOUNDING BOARD

Putting the spotlight
on racial microaggressions



What are some comments and actions you've encountered or witnessed at IRCC?

Saying things like "where are you **really** from", "you speak so eloquently for a Black person" and "I'm not racist, but..." **is not OK**. These are what are called "micro-aggressions."

In many recent Town Halls, participants were invited to share microaggressions they've been subjected to or witnessed in the past. The responses were saddening, frustrating and angering, but the fact that conversations are happening brings some measure of hope. Listening and ensuring everyone has a voice has always been essential to our Department. From an IRCC perspective, when microaggressions occur they get in the way of our work and does not fall in line with our organizational values. It is essential that we address microaggressions when they happen. Not only to enable our workplace to be inclusive but simply because it's the right thing to do.

The effect of racial microaggressions

Below are samples of various comments and what they ultimately can mean. The vast majority of these were raised at the above-mentioned Town Halls. Hurtful comments like these can affect a person's confidence, mental health and their ability to feel accepted in the workplace.

Microaggressions are offensive comments, indignities, or actions directed at someone who is a member of a minority or other non-dominant group. While these are sometimes subtle or unintentional, they are nonetheless hurtful, exhausting, and reinforce racist stereotypes and prejudices, and that's why we need to shine a brighter light on them.

How to respond to microaggressions

Knowing what to say or how to behave can be nerve-racking when disarming microaggressions in your daily life. Dr. Diane Goodman recommends using the three tactics below from her list of [prepared statements](#). If you've participated in microaggressions in the past, you can learn and grow from that moment. The Office of Conflict resolution has a [Giving and Receiving Model](#) that can help teach us to take responsibility and stand together for racialized groups in four simple steps.

When having conversations

Ask for more clarification

"Could you say more about what you mean by that?"
"How have you come to think that?"

Separate intent from impact

"I know you didn't realize this, but when you _____ (comment/behavior), it was _____ (feeling, e.g. hurt) because _____ (Impact). Instead you could _____ (request for different language or behavior.)"

"When I saw/heard you _____ (comment/behavior) at/ during _____ (place, location), I was _____ (feeling, e.g. surprised) and it made me think that _____ (impact). I know you had good intentions; it would be better for me if next time you did _____ (request for different language or behavior).

Share your own process

"I noticed that you _____ (comment/behavior). I used to do/say that too, but then I learned _____."



Sharing experiences

Racism isn't something that only happens elsewhere or to others. It has been in our past, it remains in our present, but we have an opportunity to not make it our future. Telling your story is meant to bring us together in learning and sharing experiences that can create being change. It is just a small part of what we see as a hopeful beginning.

If ever you need someone to talk to there are counsellors available through the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#). Our department offers [informal conflict and mediation services](#) to help provide resolutions and advice to employees.

There are also intentional acts of racism. If you wish to report an incident [the Office of Internal Disclosure and Reprisal Protection](#) are accessible to all IRCC employees.

-Your friends at Today@IRCC & The Anti-racism Task Force



Foreignness in your own country

Comment or action

"Where are you from, no really."

"You're not what I expected" when meeting someone in person due to my last name.

"What do you eat when you're back home?"

People passing over me in the receiving line at a reception and shaking hands with only the "white" Canadians



Underlying assumption

That someone of a different skin colour is not Canadian.

What that can say to someone

You don't belong here.
I am normal, you are not.
You're not "Canadian" enough.



Ascribing intelligence or economic status

Comment or action

Assuming someone's spouse who was there to pick up his wife from work is an Uber driver.

"You speak so eloquently for a Black person"

"You must be good at math" towards an Asian person

Suggestions or comments at meetings ignored and only acknowledged when echoed by a white colleague.

Assuming someone was hired as a "visible minority hire."



Underlying assumption

That skin colour is a valid basis on which to ascribe or evaluate someone's intelligence.

What that can say to someone

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) members are less intelligent than others. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.



Avoiding the acknowledgement of race or that disparities and barriers exist

Comment or action

"I don't see colour" used by a white person in a racism discussion.

"There is only one race: the human race."



Underlying assumption

That ethnic origin, culture, and race aren't important and hasn't been a source of barriers.

What that can say to someone

Racial experiences don't matter.
You're not a racial being.
You should assimilate into the dominant culture.



Assumption of criminal status

Comment or action

A store owner following someone around the store watching them due to the colour of their skin.

Avoiding getting into the elevator with someone based on the colour of their skin.



Underlying assumption

That a BIPOC is criminal, deviant, or dangerous, based on their race.

What that can say to someone

You are probably a criminal.
You are dangerous.



Denial of individual racism

Comment or action

"I am not racist, but..."

"As a woman, I know what it means to be oppressed. I can't be racist."

"My _____ was Indigenous, so I get it."

"I studied for three years in Japan."



Underlying assumption

A statement made to deny racial biases.

What that can say to someone

Your experiences are not important, not true, or are lesser than mine.



Making communication styles or values seem abnormal

Comment or action

“Relax, it was just a joke.”

“It’s not a big deal”

Allowing problematic racial comments to be dismissed.

Telling someone who comes from a culture with a more open and animated communication style to “calm down.”

Asking someone who comes from a less open culture why they are so quiet.



Underlying assumption

That the dominant, white culture is ideal.

What that can say to someone

Your culture and self are less than.

