



OPIRG BROCK Safer Space Policy

August 2021 Version (Previous updates 2017 & 2018)

A – Summary

The intention of this Safer Space Policy is to combat homophobia, sexism, transphobia, gender policing, racism, classism, ableism, and other forms of oppression that threaten the physical or psychological well-being of individuals attending the meetings or events of OPIRG Brock, as well as people participating in OPIRG Brock Action Groups or as volunteers, staff, or board members. OPIRG Brock recognizes that it is unrealistic that our spaces will be a truly safe space for all individuals, but believes it is the right of all individuals participating to be free of these forms of oppression and that our best efforts must be put into combating them.

B – Safer Space Frameworks

1. Safer Space Standards

All individuals attending OPIRG Brock events must help to maintain a safer space by managing their own behaviour including but not limited to complying with the following guidelines. There is a collective understanding that all people are in ongoing self-education processes on many of these issues and have the ability to be challenged and learn from mistakes and causing harm. However, working under a model of multi-step transformative justice that allows for recovery and repair means that the emotional and physical safety needs of those harmed will be prioritized as a means of preventing and/ or minimizing harm.

1.1. Acknowledge Colonialism

Recognize that the land we currently organize on has been colonized (forcibly taken) from the Indigenous people of Turtle Island. Recognize that the violence of colonization is not confined to

solitary events, but is an ongoing process that continues to impact Indigenous peoples. For example, Indigenous people and cultures face a continued push for erasure and assimilation and we challenge the Canadian nationalism that reinforces the celebration of colonization.

1.2. No Racism

Show respect for individuals of all races. Do not fetishize, dismiss or isolate people of colour. E.g., do not use racial slurs or stereotypes.

1.3. No Homophobia

Show respect for individuals of all sexual orientations. E.g., don't use the word 'gay' as an insult or use gay, queerphobic, biphobic, or panphobic slurs.

1.4. No Transphobia

Show respect for individuals of all gender identities, gender expressions, and gender performances. E.g. don't use words such as 'tranny' and 'trans' or use transphobic or gender-based slurs (unless using it as a reclaimed word to describe yourself).

1.5. No Sexism

Show respect for individuals of all gender identities and all gender expressions. E.g., Don't use words such as 'slut' or 'bitch' (unless you are using it as a reclaimed word to describe yourself). Remember that people of all genders can perform all tasks. Remember that there is nothing wrong with a person of any sex being 'feminine' or 'masculine.'

1.6. No Classism

Show respect for individuals of all classes. E.g., be mindful of your class privilege and do not assume resources that are accessible to you are accessible to everyone.

1.7. No Ableism

Show respect for individuals of all abilities and disabilities. E.g., do not assume what abilities a person has or does not have. Remember that not all disabilities are visible.

1.8. Practice Consent

Respect the boundaries and autonomy of others. E.g., Ask for consent before touching anyone. Accept 'no' for an answer. Do not pressure others to engage in behaviours that they are not comfortable with.

2. Updated Framework (2018)

2.1. Understanding of Anti-Oppression

Have background in anti-oppression and anti-racism training or must plan to attend such trainings as they are offered by community groups in conjunction with OPIRG Brock.

2.2. Understanding of power & privilege

Acknowledge the deeply pervasive nature of white supremacist, cis, ableist, patriarchal and capitalist society – through exposure to both theory and community organizing, as well as lived experiences.

2.3. Understanding of Allyship

Understanding of the fluid nature of allyship, not a self-determined noun but a verb that can be assigned by a community and is not constant.

3. Updated Framework (2021)

Aligned with the Niagara Reproductive Justice Values Statement, in 2021, the OPIRG Brock Safer Space was updated to better reflect the commitments needed to practice our safer space frameworks.

3.1. Commitment to Indigenous solidarity, anti-racism, & intersectionality

3.1.1. Indigenous Solidarity

In all of our activism, events, team education, and community partnerships, we must be prioritizing voices and priorities of Indigenous people, as the historical and still ongoing colonization of the region is foundational to the oppressive settler state of Canada from which all injustices unfold. In practice, this means listening and responding to Indigenous led calls to action locally, provincially, nationally, and globally.

3.1.2. Challenging racism

In all of our activism, events, team education, and community partnerships, we must be prioritizing the fact that anti-Black racism has deep colonial roots that continue to permeate our interactions, community spaces, and activism. We must be cognizant and combat how Anti-Black racism results in increased cultural appropriation, exclusion, erasure, stereotyping, targeting, gaslighting, violence, murder, and genocide for Black people and communities.

We must also be vigilant on how centuries of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism inform and perpetuate discrimination against other people of colour, and be vigilant about addressing these systemic issues at a personal, interpersonal, and structural level.

3.1.3. Intersectional approach

One means of committing to challenging racism in our practices is shifts which voices and experiences we feature and prioritize for positions of leadership, governance, and programming. We must be moving in a direction where our work prioritizes the voices, experiences, and initiatives from Indigenous peoples, Black peoples, Peoples of Colour (BIPOC).

Taking an intersectional approach and thinking about how compounding experiences of oppression can increase exclusion, we must also look at prioritizing peoples with various gender expressions, presentations and identities, peoples with various sexual orientations, disabled peoples/peoples with disabilities (visible and invisible), peoples navigating mental health concerns (diagnosed and undiagnosed), addiction(s), and/or navigating recovery processes, peoples with no and/or precarious immigration status, survivors of/peoples with experiences of sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking, emotional abuse, ritual abuse, or physical abuse, poor people/low-income peoples, peoples with no and/or precarious housing, sex workers, peoples who use drugs, incarcerated peoples and peoples with criminal records, pregnant peoples, parents, and caregivers, fat peoples, peoples across age cohorts, and peoples from a wide range of cultural and faith backgrounds.

3.2. Body liberation at all levels

3.2.1. Sex Work Solidarity

In all of our activism, events, team education, and community partnerships, we must be respecting and supporting the fact that sex work is real work. OPIRG Brock calls for the full decriminalization of sex work as well as rights, safety, and respect for all sex workers. All types of labour under capitalism, including sex work, is the selling of one's skills, knowledge, and body.

3.2.2. Reproductive Justice Framework

In all of our activism, events, team education, and community partnerships, we must be pushing pro-choice politics and narratives that work for reproductive justice. Our work must align with the values that ensure that, as well as having access to abortion, everyone has the right to have children under the conditions they want to have them and raise them in a safe and healthy environment. This means that reproductive justice is deeply connected to other forms of justice, including decolonization, racial justice, prison and police abolition, immigrant justice, environmental justice, economic justice, disability justice, among many others.

3.2.3. Gender Liberation

We believe in a world where all people have control over their own bodies. This includes the ability to self-prescribe abortion, estrogen, testosterone, and birth control and access these resources for free. We do not believe in gender policing, including any form of transmedicalism,

trans-exclusionary radical feminism, or transphobia, and are committed to these forms of discrimination and judgement within our activism, events, team education, and community partnerships,

3.2.4. Disability and accessibility

We strive to make our organization, events, and campaigns as accessible as possible to all types of disabilities, mental health diagnoses, mental illnesses, and experiences of trauma.

Increasing accessibility for disabled and non-disabled folks requires that we meaningfully examine the following elements in our organizing:

- Physical spaces (e.g. entry/exit, navigation, washrooms, access to water)
- Signage
- Languages/ translations options
- Providing food and water
- Sensory environment (e.g. flashing lights, loud noises)
- Ensuring access to a sharps container and narcan/ Naloxone
- Presence of security
- Options for a quiet environment, if needed
- Option of mental health supports, if needed
- Proximity to public transit
- Providing childcare/caretaking
- Timing (start time & end time) and dates of events

In doing social, economic, and environmental justice work, we cover a wide range of topics that can be triggering. Within meeting spaces, we encourage people for both their mental and physical needs to take breaks, stand up, and move around as needed. However, in doing this, we ask that you keep in mind this can be distracting and come in conflict with other people's needs, and to be as respectful of this as possible.

3.2.5. Harm Reduction approach

We believe in a harm reduction approach to substance use, which means that an abstinence only approach is not . We therefore strive to make our organization, events, and campaigns accessible and safe for people who use substances.

3.3. Collective liberation & community accountability

3.3.1. Collective care and boundaries

We aspire to create organizing environments where people can talk about, address, and incorporate our organizing team's needs, boundaries, scheduling commitments, and concerns. Some people's needs and schedules may come in conflict with others, and it is through discussion that we can best find a solution that works for everyone.

3.3.2. Supporting survivors of violence

Through our policies and practices, we believe in and support the safety needs and voices of survivors of violence, including, but not limited to, intimate partner violence, gender based violence, and state violence.

If a safety need or consideration is brought forward, it will be handled in accordance with the processes outlined in this process, and kept confidential to those whom it concerns. If the person with the concern chooses to file an OPIRG Brock Incident Report to the OPIRG Brock Accountability Committee, they can choose to do this.

3.3.3. Transformative Justice approach

There is a collective understanding that all people are in ongoing self-education processes on many of these issues and have the ability to be challenged and learn from mistakes and causing harm. However, working under a model of multi-step transformative justice that allows for recovery and repair means that the emotional and physical safety needs of those harmed will be prioritized as a means of preventing and/ or minimizing harm.

Depending on the needs of those impacted and through our policy applications, we are committed to using the call-ins, call-ons, and call-outs, as a means of team education and collective liberation, when applicable and safe to do so.

C - Policy Application

4. Policy scope

4.1. Events, Meetings, & Spaces

Individuals must comply with OPIRG Brock Safer Space Policy while attending all OPIRG events and meetings and while at any location owned or leased by OPIRG Brock. The Safer Space Policy will be read or otherwise displayed to individuals attending all public events, not including public meetings.

4.2. People

Compliance with the Safer Space Policy will be a mandatory requirement of OPIRG Brock Staff, Board Directors, Volunteers, Members, and event participants present in an OPIRG Brock event, meeting, or space.

4.3. Action Groups

Compliance with the Safer Space Policy will be a mandatory requirement of OPIRG Brock Action Groups to meet Action Group Status.

D - Violations of Safer Space Policy

5. Reporting violations

5.1. It will be considered sufficient evidence that the behaviour occurred if a witness reports the potential violation directly to a board member, staff member, signing member of an action group (the individuals who are listed with contact info on application), or a volunteer of OPIRG-Brock.

5.2. These details brought forward will be reported through the OPIRG Brock Incident Report to the OPIRG Brock Accountability Committee through the Feedback & Concerns Liaison, and can be submitted anonymously or not, depending on the wishes of the person/ people who brought them forward.

5.3. In the case of sexual or physical violence related to an OPIRG Brock event, space, or person (staff, board, volunteers, contractors, programming participants) is the type of violation must be reported (e.g., sexual harassment).

5.4. In the case of acts of prejudice or discrimination, enough details of the violation must be provided in order for the board to determine if it was sufficiently intentional, reckless, and/or severe.

5.5. All personal details and contact information of the person reporting the violation will remain confidential to the individual(s) the violation was reported to, the OPIRG Board, and the staff members (if applicable), unless otherwise expressed by the person reporting the violation.

5.6. Upon receipt of an OPIRG Brock Incident Report, the OPIRG Brock Accountability Committee will meet to review, address the concern, and follow up accordingly.

6. Violations Immediately Resulting in Loss of Standing

6.1. An individual will be considered to no longer be in good-standing with OPIRG Brock, and will be banned from all of OPIRG Brock's events, meetings, physical locations, action groups and general membership if they commit any of the following:

6.1.1. Sexual or physical violence including, but not limited to, sexual assault, physical assault, or sexual harassment.

6.1.2. Intentional or reckless and severe acts of prejudice or discrimination (as determined by the board).

7. Procedure for violation(s) of Safer Space Policy

7.1. If an individual violates this policy (not including the violations above), the OPIRG Brock Accountability Committee is able to set up a meeting with that individual. If it is not apparent that the individual understands why their behaviour violates the policy this will be explained to them at that time.

7.2. Repeated violations will result in loss of standing with OPIRG-Brock at the discretion of OPIRG Brock's Board of Directors.

8. Procedure in the Case of Loss of Standing

8.1 OPIRG Brock will request a meeting with the individual who has lost standing, which will be attended by two members of the OPIRG Brock Board of Directors. If the individual refuses to meet in person the board may communicate with the individual by email instead.

8.2. Board members will indicate what led the individual to lose their standing (in a means that does not violate privacy of any survivor reports, can be limited to the type of violation e.g., racism/sexual harassment).

8.3. Board members will explain that the individual who has lost standing that they are no longer welcome at OPIRG events, public meetings, or physical locations (e.g., office space), and may no longer be a member of OPIRG-Brock or any of its action groups.

8.4. If a person has lost standing at OPIRG Brock, and attempts to join an active OPIRG Brock Action Group, this information, as well as the cause of lost standing, will be presented to the Action Group, and may impact their Action Group status.

8.5. Board members will provide individuals who have lost standing with educational resources related to the violation of the policy that the individual committed.

8.6. Any fees memberships paid by the individual for the current year will be refunded to the individual who has lost standing if they attend the requested meeting or provide a mailing address.