

Tip sheet

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are subtle—often unintended—slights, snubs, comments or behaviours that reinforce stereotypes or assumptions. They are typically directed at people in minority groups, which can include Indigenous peoples, people of colour, persons with disabilities, women and members of the LGBTQ+ community. If they are not called-out, they can have a real impact on our team and slow our progress of making inclusion the cornerstone of our bank's culture.

We all have a role to play when we hear these subtle acts of exclusion. No exceptions.



Hiring and promotion

"I'd like to see a 'diversity candidate' on the slate."

Assumption: That some people are 'diverse' while others are 'normal'.

Response: Everyone has a range of characteristics (experience, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) that make them unique. Use the term 'diverse' or 'diversity' to describe groups (e.g., 'this team is diverse') not individuals. When you call someone 'diverse', you can make them feel different or like they don't belong.

"I support diversity, but shouldn't the most qualified person always get the job?"

Assumption: We are lowering the bar to hire or promote certain candidates to meet quotas or targets.

Response: It's possible to hire the best person for the role *and* for that talent to reflect the clients and communities served by CIBC. This is accomplished by checking our blind spots so we don't inadvertently disadvantage top talent because they're different than the team that's currently in place.

"We're so focused on finding 'diverse' candidates that people like me don't have a chance!"

Assumption: That candidates from under-represented groups benefit at the expense of others (e.g., white men, etc.) who are more qualified.

Response: Inclusion isn't about disadvantaging one group so that another can prosper. It's the practice of widening the gate so that everyone has an opportunity to achieve their full potential. And, if a team doesn't reflect the entire talent pool, valuable skills and perspectives are missed, impacting performance.



Stereotyping

"You people are all so good at math!" said to an Asian team member

"You're so articulate—where did you learn to speak so well?" said to a member of the Black community

Assumption: Hard or soft skills (e.g., math, analytics, communications, etc.) are associated with or can be attributed to race/ethnicity.

Response: Making generalizations about someone's skills or abilities based on their race/ethnicity is unprofessional, even when positioned as a compliment. Instead, be specific, for example "that was a great point you made at today's presentation!".



Recognizing power and privilege

"You know me, I don't see colour. I'm colourblind."

Assumption: That some people are not influenced by unconscious bias.

Response: Everyone's behaviour and decisions can be impacted by unconscious bias. Be mindful about unintentional impacts by practicing intentional inclusion. By saying 'you don't see colour', you ignore the truth: people of colour regularly experience bias, prejudice and racism because of the colour of their skin.

"Your pronouns are hard to remember, so just ignore me when I say 'she'" said to a trans team member

Assumption: That the gender of your colleague is less valid than your own.

Response: When someone shares an aspect of their identity, take it as the truth. No exceptions. If you misgender someone in error, offer a genuine apology and try to do better next time.