

The "Self-Advocacy Groups Updates" are a series of articles written by people using services within the grassroots self-advocate groups in Christian Horizons' communities. The topics for these monthly articles will include a range of topics, highlighting the perspectives of people who use services.

Our VOICES Matter

Written by Dzidra Halar & Mo Ahmad

The [dictionary](#) says that racism is "the belief that some races are better than others, or the unfair treatment of someone because of his or her race."

Mo defines it like this: "Racism is kind of like 'what are you doing here? You're not supposed to be here. Why are you here? You're brown or white or black and we don't support that. You're a colour I don't understand so you need to get out of here. You need to go back to where you came from.'" Dzidra explains that "racism is when someone says something about your colour, or they look at you differently."

Dzidra says she does not have any personal experiences but Mo says "I've been called a Paki boy, I was told that I was brown so I need to drink chocolate milk. I've had to deal with a lot of racism towards me."

Black Lives Matter has been bringing a lot of attention to racism over the last few months because of what happened to George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake, and others. Dzidra says, "Even in Canada people are doing things, like the Raptors wore special jerseys after Jacob Blake was gunned down and they boycotted the game. And it wasn't just them. They wore their BLM jerseys and they did a video too."

Christian Horizons asked for an anti-racism task force to bring awareness in Christian Horizons and to make recommendations. Christian Horizons never had anything like this before. It's the first of its kind.

The task force ran for 2 months over the summer of 2020 and there were 14 people on the committee. It was a mix of staff and upper managers from different homes and people who use Christian Horizons services (Dzidra and Mo). There were Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), and Caucasian (white) people.

"Every time we would meet, we would talk about different programs and how we were seeing racism in the community," Mo explains. "We made a lot of recommendations. We made a report and it was going to go to the board and the board was going to look at it and then hopefully implement it."

Dzidra explains, "It was shared in the *On The Horizons* newsletter and Janet came to the last task force meeting we had. We proposed recommendations and actions. They all are good and important."

Here is a list of those recommendations:

1. **Create a statement that acknowledges an organizational anti-racism stance.**
2. **Create awareness and build knowledge on the topic of anti-racism.**
3. **Hold all stakeholders of Christian Horizons accountable for incidents of racism.**
4. **Collect, analyze, and report on racial and ethnic demographics of Christian Horizons.**
5. **Create anti-racism resources to assist the people using Christian Horizons services.**
6. **Increase the racial and ethnic diversity of leadership groups and to have cross-cultural representation at all levels of the organization.**

One of the first things to be implemented was the [Anti-Racism Statement](#), which reads:

"Christian Horizons recognizes that Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour experience systemic racism within our society. Christian Horizons is committed to ensuring that these members of our community feel valued. In order to stand together with our colleagues, partners, and neighbours who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, we must address systemic racism. We can do better. As an organization that advocates for and upholds the rights of people who experience disabilities, we have a responsibility to learn from the experiences of all marginalized minorities. Christian Horizons will continue to work, with intention, towards promoting communities of belonging where Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour feel valued, respected, represented, and heard."



Mo has agreed to be part of the new, ongoing Diversity & Inclusion Working Group.