

**Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force
Board of Administration Report
March 2021**

Chair: Rev. Keitha Ogbogu

Co Chair: Rev. Darrin Lindsay

Team Members:

Raquel John Matuzewiski

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The Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force has been meeting regularly to create our mandate and begin our research. In October and November our team met to discuss our mandate. We discussed with denominational leaders from outside of the FMCiC who invited us to listen to stories and process their various experiences as diversity and anti racism task forces. Our group spent time talking, praying and reading as we tried to narrow down our focus. The conversations we had were rich and demonstrated the diversity of opinions and approaches that people from varied backgrounds and education take when considering the work of racial justice. As a result of these processes and diverse understandings, the first thing that shifted was our task force name was changed from *Anti Racism Task Force* to the *Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force*. The rationale for the shift in name came from a few members who wanted to ensure, that while we were communicating the need to end racism, we ought to help individuals move away from the notion that “race” is real. In other words, we are humans, created in the image of God and it is this understanding that we should be pointing one another towards with the hope that it will lead us towards a more just and equitable society for all, regardless of distinctives, culture, language and ethnicity. This focus is not to point us towards the problematic idea of “colour blindness”, rather it is intended to invite one another to acknowledge, celebrate, validate and declare that the beautiful design of diverse communities, skin tones, ethnicities, practices and relationships is God breathed.

Secondly we took our “mission” and wanted to place it in a clear (and hopefully) measurable statement. The overarching goal is biblical shalom that extends from church leadership, both nationally and locally, ushering in the possibility of transformation that leads to racial and ethnic diversity, inclusion and equity into the neighbourhoods where we live and minister.

Thirdly we attached some objectives that are intended to help us put the mandate into practice and keep us focused on specific tasks.

I have attached a copy of the mandate document for you to review.

The task force has broken into sub teams to consider how we will begin the “story and statistics” portion of our research.

Raquel John Matuzewski will lead a team looking at our history as the FMCiC in relation to racial justice and ethnic equity. To date their research has covered our history as a church that was once directly connected with First Nations communities but did little to steward or build on this relationship. While we have a narrative that tells our story as abolitionists, the history shows some level of indifference. Our foundations of justice shifted towards “holiness” and the pursuit of perfection.

Rev. Darrin Lindsay is leading the research into leadership and how that has and continues to frame our ideals around diversity, equity and inclusion. This will begin with a survey for the NLT, National staff team and pastoral leaders to be followed up with interviews of past and present leaders to understand the stories behind the data.

Pastor Sabrina Hinds and Xenia Chan are co leading a team working to understand our congregations by doing an ethnography that will provide a snapshot of how congregations view themselves, their communities and how their actions seek to engage or ignore racial justice and ethnic equity. This will be reminiscent of an academic review and our team is very excited to see how this unique overview of Canadian FMCiC perspectives emerges through data and stories.

To ensure that we avoid bias in our work we are looking into working with an intercultural specialist. We have a few candidates in mind and will converse with them to better understand what they have to offer as well as the cost for their services. We will present the overview of these different candidates to the office of the Bishop and the IET for review and consideration.

This season has been full for the team, but the work they are putting together is phenomenal. As the teams come together, we have two individuals from Quebec, Lindsay Noel and Roland Jeudy who are going to take the information we have gathered to refine, rewrite and execute the research required for the churches in Quebec. They both have a unique perspective as they work for the denomination, are involved in French churches in Quebec and are racialized people. Their contribution is invaluable.

The RJEETF is also having conversations with the nominating committee to try to understand the lack of diversity on our national teams. This was brought to our attention as something to look into from various individuals and the Bishop. This is an area that needs intentionality and strong leadership to make happen. We look forward to hearing more from the nominating committee as to their methods, challenges and ideas to allow national leadership to reflect the diversity of our churches and our neighbourhoods.

The task that is before us is immense, but as we engage with Christians who come from different ethnic backgrounds and have encountered racism within the church or because of the church we are reminded that this is the work of the Spirit. That the FMCiC would be known as a diverse, inclusive and anti racist denomination is a dream that we hope leadership and congregations can support. Your prayers and support are appreciated.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Keitha Ogbogu
Rev. Darrin Lindsay

The RJEE Task Force will offer recommendations to the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCiC) Intercultural Engagement Team (IET) and the Board of Administration (BOA) to empower our leaders and congregations to address the reality of racism in all its forms and the need to intentionally implement a justice and equity strategy that rejects systemic racism.

Our goal is that our movement would embody ethnic diversity, conciliation, and deep intercultural relationships as necessary markers of biblical shalom.

Our objectives will be to:

- Evaluate the FMCiC's theological and policy statements regarding racial and ethnic diversity, equality and equity.
- Recommend specific changes or insertions to theological and policy statements that lead to the intentional implementation of racial justice and ethnic equity.
- Explore opportunities for adjustments to FMCiC denominational systems, with the goal of providing equitable pathways for racialized persons to participate in denominational and local church leadership.
- Create defining terminology and resource lists that support the content related to diversity, access, equity and social inclusion.
- Provide pathways and advocate for individuals affected by racism in the church and the community to move towards healing, wholeness and justice.
- Suggest specific opportunities for local congregations to explore, learn about, and invest in the establishment of a truly anti-racist, intercultural environment across generations.