

Alzheimer Society

C A N A D A

THE ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF CANADA IS CHANGING HOW WE SEE, DISCUSS AND LEARN ABOUT RACE AND DEMENTIA IN CANADA

Systemic racism exists in Canada. We understand it is an unconscious aspect of life for many of us, but Black Canadians are forced to face extra hurdles their fellow citizens never have to experience. Becoming conscious to the truth of systemic racism is the basis of change, but real, impactful difference requires a new approach.

We support protesting racism.

The assertive protests on systemic racism have made many Canadians and organizations realize they must do more to ensure representation, inclusion and, most of all, accountability. Black Lives Matter, and we are taking specific, measurable steps to deliver change and we will be accountable.

At the Alzheimer Society of Canada, we work to change the lives of those living with dementia. We acknowledge that we have not done enough to combat the systemic oppression felt by Black Canadians, and how they, Indigenous Peoples, and other People of Colour connect with the health services in our country. Based on information collected from the US & UK, dementia impacts Black people at higher rates with some studies showing twice the occurrence than white populations. Yet we do not know the impact this disease has on Black, Indigenous Peoples, and other Canadians of colour, because the available data is minimal at best.

We are changing how we see, discuss, and learn about race and dementia in Canada.

Last year we initiated work to balance the scales in how we operate, and how we understand the experience of those impacted most by this disease. We are making immediate changes to accelerate and deepen this work:

- Knowledge of how Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) experience dementia and the healthcare system in Canada is woefully inadequate. Our first step to changing this is to grow the Alzheimer Society of Canada's Advisory Group composed of people living with dementia. This group is vital to our work but is almost entirely white. We will grow the group to be five times larger, and a minimum of 30% will be BIPOC.
- Physicians are insufficiently equipped when dealing with dementia, especially for BIPOC who experience the healthcare system differently. We are conducting a national survey to identify the experiences of people living with dementia, with an intentional focus on BIPOC communities. The data we capture will shape and deliver new resources to ensure family physicians are equipped to support all Canadians living with dementia.
- We produce a vast amount of information to support people living with dementia, which is central to helping those we serve. But these materials do not reflect Canada's racial and cultural reality. This is changing. With the support of our newly structured Advisory Group and the data from the survey, we will develop new materials by March 2022.

We are changing how we hire our people, manage our business, and deliver our work.

- To accelerate change within our organization, over the next two years 50% of our professional development budget will be dedicated to mandatory inclusivity and anti-racism training. This development will remain a key, long-term component of our professional development budget and processes for our existing team, new hires, and our Board.

- We will implement new recruitment standards to identify and remove any traces of bias, and to actively deliver a team and Board that looks like Canada, and where marginalized people are not just safe, but can thrive and grow.
- We will build specific, formal relationships with diverse community groups, and build partnerships requiring engagement by staff at all levels so we can listen, understand and be accountable for developing programs and services for Canadians of colour.

Accountability

We know not everything will work, and we know this will not be easy. But we will publicly track, measure and alter course to get it right. This is a journey towards change. And we know our team, present and future, will join us in making the Alzheimer of Society of Canada a better place to work, and Canada a better place to live.