



University
of Manitoba

A UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICE THEORY FRAMEWORK

Transforming EDI to RDEI Outcomes

Systemic Solutions for Disrupting Racism and
Intersecting Structural & Systemic Barriers

Towards Healing and Sustainable Human,
Socio-political, and Economic Development

*MITACS Project Report & Application Guide
December 2025*



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1. Preamble:

Project Context & Acknowledgments

This report is the conclusion of a 2023–2024 MITACS Business Strategic Internship (BSI) partnership project between the University of Manitoba (UM) and the City of Saskatoon, implemented in collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan (USask). The project was initiated through the Faculty of Social Work by a team of four practice theorists, the Partnerships, Knowledge Mobilization & Innovation Office UM, and MITACS, an agency that funds applied research, innovation, and development work to solve real-world issues through collaboration between industry/public institutions and educational institutions.

The project was grounded in four key points.

Social work’s core function as an agent of positive social change (Baffoe, 2020; Gray et al., 2016;) in the face of historical, persisting, and deepening structural and systemic barriers entrenching personal and social problems. This, amid the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) with its ideal standards, coupled with scientific progress, has supported shallow and fractured progress. However, the sustainable wellbeing and holistic development of humanity is possible.

The UNESCO Declaration on Race (1978). Partsch (1982), Lwanga (2004) and other scholars highlight the **unique position of race** among other prohibited grounds of discrimination under the UDHR (1948), i.e., the contradicting meanings and roles of race and “race” within human rights work is a fundamental structural and systemic barrier, but there are processes rendering it resolvable.

Diversity is a natural human phenomenon and a resource (West & Lwanga, 2019); a diversity of perspectives on the root causes of unresolved and persisting historical injustices is essential in establishing social justice.

The critical importance of **aligning leadership at the personal level with leadership in the public sphere within the context of “Transcendence, self-and-other”** in professional practice (Lwanga, 2016).

The City of Saskatoon, a municipal government, launched the Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) initiative in 2009 as part of CC-UNESCO’s Coalition of Inclusive Cities. Through business strategic planning, social innovation, problem-solving, and knowledge transmission and mobilization (KTMB) workshops we sought to establish the “One City Roadmap” to address systemic barriers in the city’s jurisdiction with the goal to enhance ongoing outcomes established as SMART Goals.

USask as the City of Saskatoon host university facilitated the project through a faculty member of both the Edward School of Business and the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, who, together with the City of Saskatoon project lead, co-lead the executive education workshops and strategic planning activities. Both contributed to the practice theory framework.

A clarified universal human rights practice theory (UHRPT) framework is the key social product at the educational partnership level of 18 months of strategic business planning initiative. Other contributors include 15 senior, middle, junior, and community leaders of the City of Saskatoon and 5 student interns (3 PhDs and 2 master's) who participated in 14-week KTMB workshops. Guest speakers included a First Nations Elder, a senior official from the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, and a policy analyst from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. The 3-hour weekly workshops supported knowledge exchange, evaluation, preliminary efforts to apply the theory, and the refinement of a practice theory that addressed structural and systemic barriers within the context of REDI at the City of Saskatoon. The KTMB workshops were followed by 6–8 months of desk research on best practices, phone interviews, critical evaluation framed in the UHRPT, and a comparative analysis of initiatives in other Canadian cities conducted by student interns for the City of Saskatoon report component. For more on the project, the team, and contributors, visit: <https://umanitoba.ca/social-work/MITACS-project>.

Consultations with academics and officials interested in EDI included UM's Centre for Human Rights Research, Office of Equity Transformation, Asper School of Management, and Faculty of Extended Education, and with officials at Ministry of Municipal and Northern Relations in Manitoba. We also participated in UM dialogue sessions of **Leading Change Together, 2024–2029 Strategic Plan** and the corresponding strategic research plan **Change Through Research**, and Faculty of Social Work presentations, dialogue, and critique about the value of this work. Additionally, project team members participated in Human Rights Go Local–2024, an international conference hosted by the University of Gratz, Switzerland, and sponsored by UNESCO in collaboration with international NGOs.

This report was prepared by Christine Lwanga as co-principal investigator, with input from Stryker Calvez with whom the four components of UHRPT were established; Michael Yellow Bird, who proposed the theory of change report format (The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022)); Mohammad Khan with emphasis on detail in design in applied research; Don Fuchs on social innovation and the context of grounded theory analysis; Richard Kodom, the lead student intern who compiled the appended City of Saskatoon's case example; and Michael Baffoe, the co-principal investigator tasked with the overall project oversight.

Additionally, this report was reviewed by professional scholars in Indigenous studies and social work who have provided instrumental critique and recommendations with respect to strategies that can enhance access to and the application of the UHRPT framework.

Project partners:



This report was edited by Kerry Fast (<http://www.kerryfastediting.ca>) and formatted by the University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work.

2. UHRPT Framework & Application

The Universal Human Rights Practice Theory (UHRPT) is a solution-focused theoretical framework of personal, socio-political, and economic change. It is part of systems-based thinking and knowledge in the humanities and social and economic sciences, drawing on the inherent interconnectedness of people (human nature) as social beings who are also inherently interconnected with others and their environment. This practice theory is about transformative change as a process that creates ripple effects among individuals, interpersonally, institutionally, structurally, and culturally. It is a theory to help us to:

1. comparatively analyze specific REDI needs and challenges using the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as the ideal standard;
2. build on key concepts, concept clusters, and practice theories in search of solutions to complex, dynamic human, social, and economic issues;
3. measure, assess, and evaluate change as part of applied research, innovation, and evidence-based practice theory that can be continuously improved.

UHRPT is situated within critical social theory and its goal of advancing social justice for all. It builds on a critique of the EDI practices of the first quarter of the 21st century as merely performative, sustaining and deepening historical injustices. Although EDI highlights important and valid concepts in addressing systemic barriers to justice, these ideals have failed to support sustained change in beliefs, values, practice, and culture partly because they have remained as ideas and intentions of goodwill (Gorski, 2008) within structures and systems that reinforce what it seeks to overcome. This limitation extends to related initiatives evident in the growing number of acronyms such as DEI, REDI, EDIA, IDEA, BIPOC, REIA, and EDIDI within the common goal of promoting healing and advancing social justice.

This report introduces UHRPT as a complementary action-orientated resource that can be used to effectively address and disrupt root causes of human rights violations and other injustices. It is designed as a framework of multiple evidence-based practice theories such as trauma-informed practice, integrative body-mind-spirit social work (Lee et al., 2009), and critical social theory (Bishop, 2015; Mullaly & West, 2018; Payne, 2014) in processes supporting the individual, social, structural, and physical establishment of a human rights culture. As a theory of transformative personal and social change, UHRPT is organized around grounded theory's six analysis questions explaining social processes i.e., what, why, when, where, who, and how of overcoming structural and systemic barriers, synthesized into four parts in section 3 of this report and application guide.

Part 1

helps participants in this work gain an understanding of what and how of the historical and persisting structural and systemic barriers in relation to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) standards, strategies, and goals established towards their elimination (see 3.1).

Part 2

clarifies the distinction between structural and systemic barriers, and their intersectionality, which enables their disruption. It introduces key concept clusters in this work, including the difference between race and other prohibited grounds of discrimination, exposing the life-span and intergenerational impact of inhumane social barriers that run contrary to human nature. It establishes why this work is important and garners sustained commitment to positive change.

Part 3

focuses on the four components of UHRPT and its operationalization.

Part 4

outlines how this work is directed at diverse audiences and includes the content and format of the City of Saskatoon UHRPT KTMB workshops, as an application case-example (see Appendix 7.1).

3. UHRPT Framework:

The Process Towards Structural and Systemic Healing, and Sustainable Human, Socio-political, and Economic Development

3.1 Structural and Systemic Barriers:

What Do They Entail? How Do We Get Out of Here?

Human rights violations, war, slavery, colonization, discrimination, oppression, and domination of the “other” through physical and psychological force, language, and political and economic power have existed from the beginning of human societies—they are part of dysfunctional human nature.

What do we learn from the 1948 United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the ideal standard supporting healing and sustainable human and socio-political, and economic development? Check the preamble of the declaration and learn about the essence of the UDHR (1948).

- “All people are born free and equal in dignity, worth and rights” (Article 1).
- “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (Article 2).
- Everyone has duties and responsibilities aligning with human rights, and there are limitations to rights and freedoms to ensure that they are not exercised in ways that are contrary to United Nations principles and purposes (Article 29).

History reveals strategies, interventions, and processes that have been used to establish pathways towards healing and the advancement of social justice. They extend to the vision of the Global 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) “to build stronger, safer, and more inclusive communities that leave no one behind” (UN, 2023).

Critical social theory exposes fault lines in the current EDI milieu, though they can be corrected. Some theories fail to incorporate the following.:

- a) The distinction between structural and systemic barriers to justice, and their intersectionality.
- b) The multiple levels and forms of structural and systemic barriers, their intersection, and their dynamic nature.
- c) The complex and diverse root causes of structural and systemic barriers that keep inequality entrenched and unaddressed and, dismantling and removing them from people’s lives and social institutions to support the establishment of systemic solutions in alignment with positive human nature and potential.



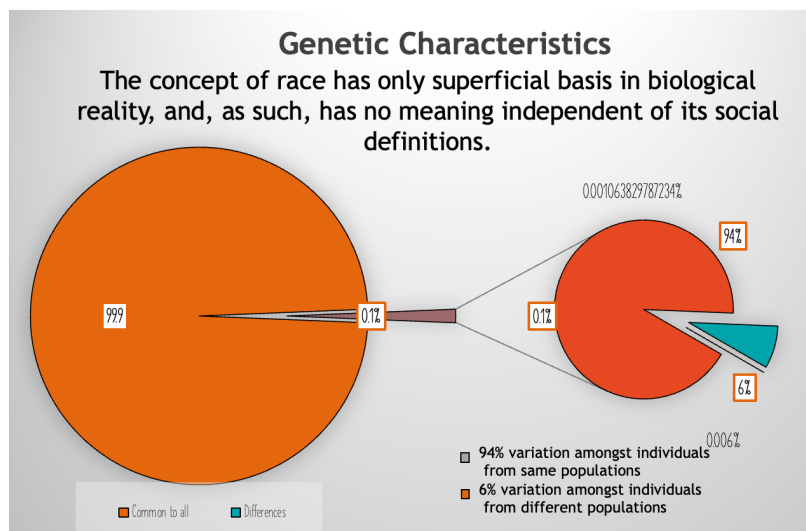
3.2 The What and Why of Structural and Systemic Barriers: An Awareness of Change as part of Systems-Based Solutions & New Knowledge Supporting Sustainable Holistic Development

Research combining human and social sciences committed to advancing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the ideal standard distinguishes between structures and systems that reproduce systemic discrimination, interrelated oppression, and inequality. It also exposes multiple strategies and interventions that must be pursued if structural barriers are to be removed. These processes include change in multiple spaces: within self and others, in personal relationships, policies, programs, public spaces, and culture.

Examples of such policy, strategic plan, program, and initiatives include the UNESCO (1978) Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice at the global level, Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Gender Equity Strategy, Canada's Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy, 2024–2028. Each is focused on a specific prohibited ground of discrimination. This report highlights race, the first prohibited grounds of discrimination, with two related goals- to expound on the what and why of structural and system barriers, and to highlight a core strategy, removing root causes towards the elimination of a problem.

3.2.1 The Unique Position, Meanings and Roles of Race Among other Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination & the Distinction between Race and “Race” Identity

Critical social theory exposes “race” identity as a social construct; the meaning and role of “race” as distinct from the one human race in reference to the human family that is marked by diversity in ethnicity, physical features, culture, religion, etc., and in reference to shared human genes (AAPA, 1996 in reference to the figure below; AABA, 2019; Haynes, 2008; UNESCO, 1978); and race as an analogy used to refer to the journey of life.



Adapted from: American Association of Physical Anthropologist. *Biological Aspects of Race. AAPA Statement on Biological Aspects of Race. Published in the American Journal of Physical Anthropology, vol. 101, pp 569-570, 1996.* <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajpa.1331010408>

below; AABA, 2019; Haynes, 2008; UNESCO, 1978); and race as an analogy used to refer to the journey of life.

“Race” identity is a persisting historical social construct that contributed to the justification of slavery, colonization, the holocaust by Nazi Germany, and South Africa’s apartheid system (1948–1994). It is best described as a socio-political and economic system of dehumanizing the “other” (UNESCO and GHFP Research Institute, 2020). It is consistently hierarchical, destructive, and insidious.

Deeper analysis exposes “race” identity as a geographic and time-specific construct fueled by power struggles (i.e., politics); Robert Miles (1989) expounded

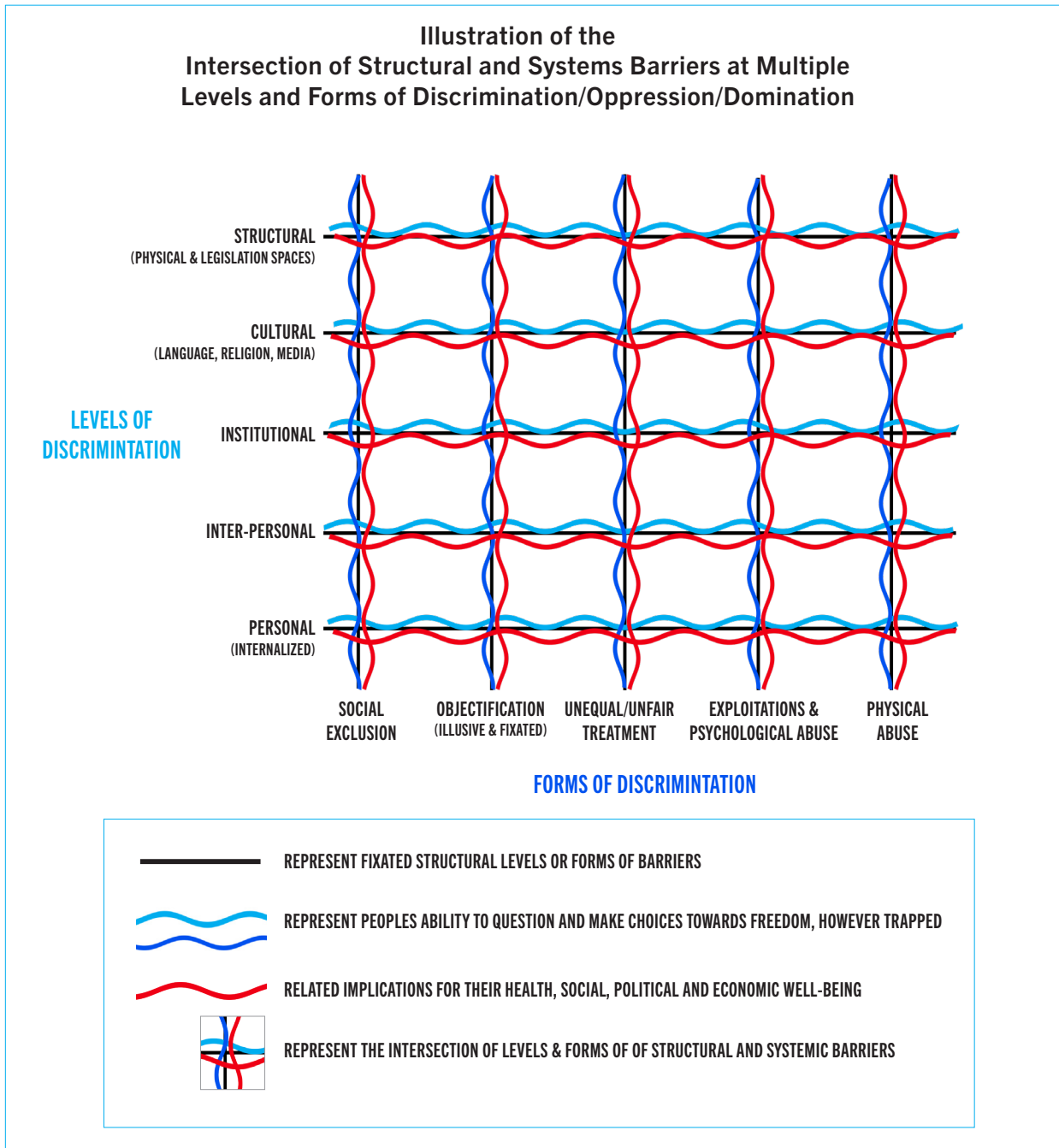
on its origins and how it contributed to nation formation in Europe. Partsch (1982) described “race” identity categorizations as **illusive and evil because they operate in a manner that is contrary to human nature**; and yet are used interchangeably or synonymously with ethnicity, cultural, and religious differences (Lwanga, 2004).

Furthermore, sanctioned illusive “race” categorizations intersect with other prohibited grounds of discrimination, directly and indirectly undermining human rights, peoples’ emotional-mental and other areas of wellbeing, family and inter-personal dynamic, as well as national and socio-political and economic development. It has been explained as a social cancer (UNESCO, 1960); however, lightly referred to as a determinant of health (Hick & Stokes, 2017).

3.2.2 Distinguishing Between Structural Barriers and Systemic Barriers

Distinguishing between barriers to justice, both structural (aligned with external social systems) and systemic (aligned with internal systems to humans), helps us to gain a deeper understanding of their root causes and how to disrupt, remove, and replace them.

Historical, human, and socio-political and economic sciences research exposes the persistent, dynamic, and intersecting nature of structural and systemic barriers, the intersecting levels and forms of discriminatory actions and events as illustrated in the figure below. And that can further intersect based on multiple prohibited grounds of human rights violations. There is an increased understanding of the negative impact this has in people’s lives and on families and society within the context of intellectual and lived experience knowledge” (Lwanga, 2016).



As an example, Elias and Paradies (2016) estimated the cost of structural and systemic racism and the resulting undermining of mental health plus the interrelated negative socio-economic impacts of racial discrimination to the Australian national economy as \$37.9 billion per year, based on 2001 to 2011 data.

They used hospitalization data and the negative health outcomes associated with exposure to racism including depression, anxiety, PTSD, and disability adjusted life years lost. This and related research findings are relevant in Canada and other countries that indirectly and directly continue to uphold legislation and policies that promote “race” ideology and “race”-based categorization, and related forms of social exclusion-inclusion beliefs and values that correspondingly promote racism and racist culture and practices.

Why? The importance of this work:

1. To garner sustained commitment from interested parties in this work of transformative positive change.
2. To maintain an awareness of the distinction between structural and systemic barriers and their intersectionality.
3. To expose the distinction and unique positions, meanings, and roles of race and “race” identity among prohibited grounds of discrimination as part of the UN UDHR (1948) and expounded upon by the UNESCO 1978 Declaration on Race and the Elimination of Racial Prejudice.
4. To establish the importance of this work by highlighting root causes and the pervasive negative impact of structural and systemic barriers in people’s lives and on society, and national sustainable well-being and holistic development
5. To enhance strategies that support systemic solutions at the personal and inter-personal levels, remove structural barriers, and establish structural solutions as part of systematic and systemic change.

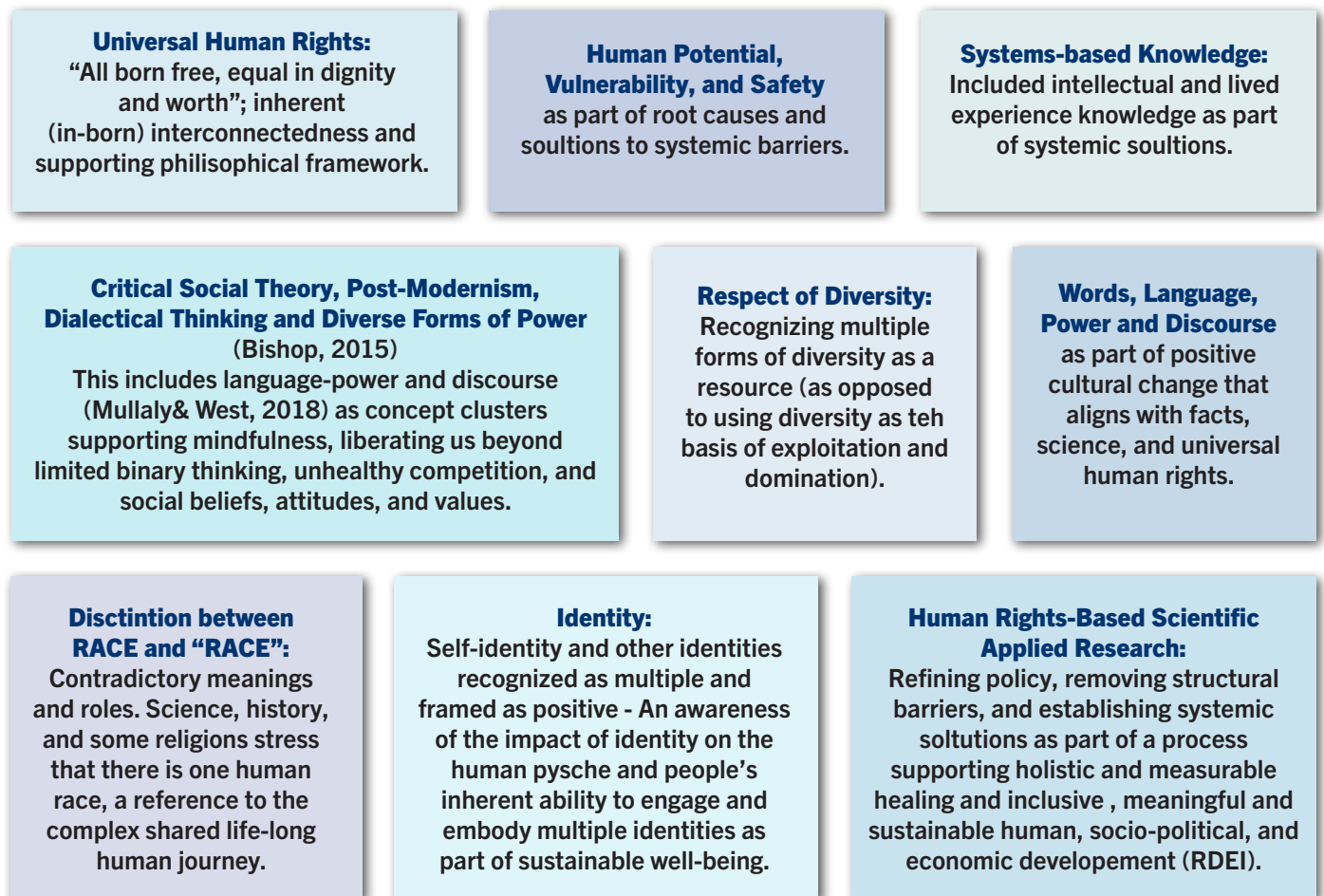


3.2.3 Key Concept Clusters: Supporting Structural and Systemic Solutions

The goals of the UHRPT are the construction of truth and reconciliation, respect of diversity as a natural human resource (West & Lwanga, 2019), and mindful, intentional, equitable inclusion—Reconciliation, Diversity, Equitable Inclusion (RDEI). To this end, this project report highlights race, the 1st prohibited ground of discrimination (UDHR, 1948), and its intersection with other prohibited grounds of discrimination and introduces structural and systemic solutions through **nine key concept clusters** that illuminate the underlying philosophy, the root causes, and the complex, dynamic nature of systemic barriers as well as exposing systemic solutions.

These concept clusters are foundational for disrupting systemic barriers as well as removing structural barriers. They are informed by critical social theory and an awareness of natural, human, social, and spiritual systems (Bishop, 2015; Lee et al., 2009). Related work referred to as body-mind-emotional-social-spiritual (BMESS) dimensions of being in alignment with the Creator’s divine design re-interpreted as Transcendent-Life-Energy-as Unconditional Love in Transformative Relations with Self-Others towards Subjective-Objective Wellbeing (TLE-UL-TR-SO-SOW), supporting healing, goodness, holistic growth, and sustainable development (Lwanga, 2016).

Summary Table of Nine Concept Clusters Supporting Systematic and Systemic Solutions



The nine concept clusters are organized as three interconnected spheres of solutions, i.e., at the structural public level, the personal/inter-personal level, and personal / institutional instruments such as practice theory such as self-agency and trauma informed practice, text books, strategies, skills, words and language, scientific evidence, and systems-based knowledge that support ongoing transformative positive change with measurable outcomes towards equitable inclusion (EI).

3.3 The UHRPT Framework: Four Core Components

Four intersecting components of the Universal Human Rights Practice Theory (UHRPT) are recognizable as embodied and intellectual knowledge supporting a systematic approach in establishing systemic and structural change.

3.3.1 FOUNDATIONAL DRIVERS

- **Universal human rights PRINCIPLES:** Human rights are in-born and are in every human being; they are also indivisible and inalienable.
- **Universal professional VALUES:** Equality of the dignity and worth of every human being, equal opportunity, self-determination, do no harm.
- **Universal professional shared OBJECTIVES:** Address historical rights violations, thereby consistently removing structural and systemic barriers, and restoring equality of human dignity.



3.3.2 UHRPT FRAMEWORK & RELATED SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

SHARED KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY AMONG THE LEADERSHIP

- (personal and interpersonal, and positions of authority): decolonization of minds (cognitive, emotive, and spiritual mind [Lee et. al, 2009]) and indigenization (liberation of thought and culture).

SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT, DYNAMIC NATURE, LEVELS, AND FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

- Oppression, domination, and privilege; their intersectionality and their intersection with other prohibited grounds of discrimination (Mullay & West, 2018); the negative outcomes of discrimination; the consistent patterns of problems in people and society, and solutions.

SHARED ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND COMMITMENT TO POSITIVE CHANGE

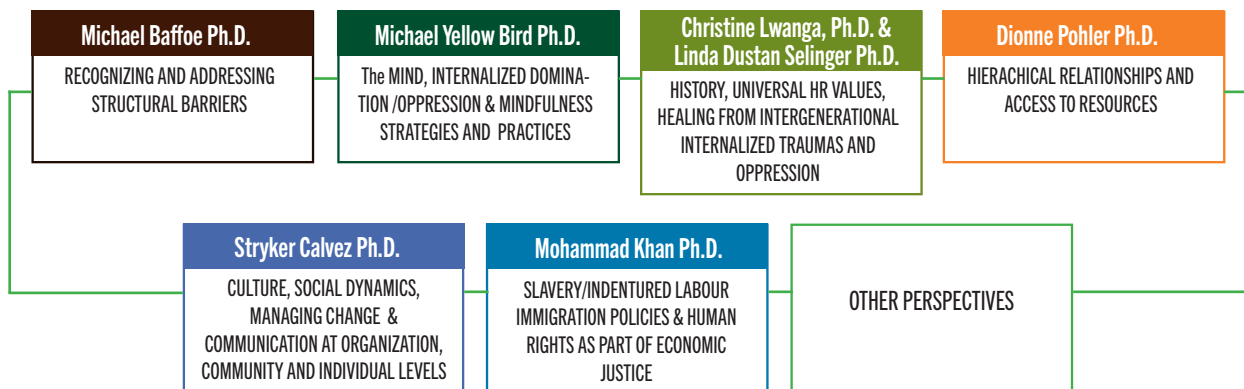
- Driven by a shared understanding of the negative impact/cost of structural and systemic barriers



3.3.3 DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

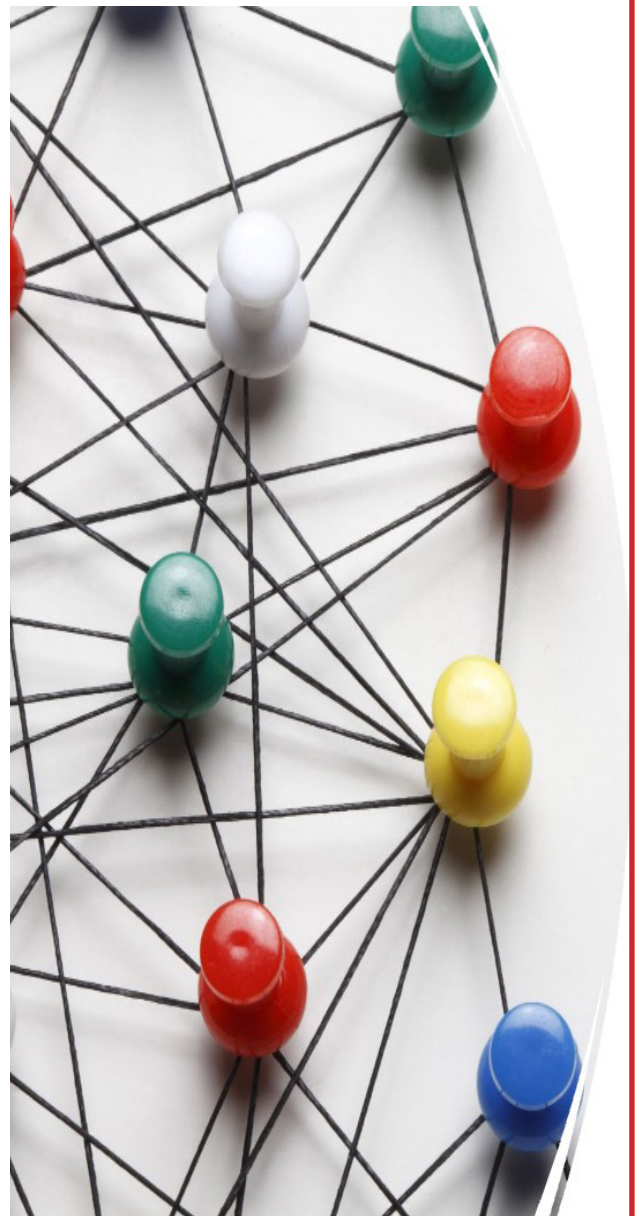
Welcoming a diversity of perspectives about the history and root causes of specific barriers to justice invites systemic solutions at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, socio-political, economic and cultural levels, at structural and physical levels too. Perspectives of the project practice theorists included the following:

- RESOLVING STRUCTURAL, INEQUITABLE, COLONIAL, AND OTHER HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIPS that are contrary to universal human rights (Baffoe et al., 2014; Banack & Pohler, 2023; Koebel & Pohler, 2020).
- CRITIQUING, DISSOLVING “RACE” in alignment with ONE HUMAN RACE and HEALING the wounds of “race” and other intersecting injustices through natural and human-rights informed social sciences (AABA, 2019; Dustan, 2016; Lwanga, 2004, 2016; Lwanga et al., 2019; Nguma, 2020; Reagan, 2015; UNESCO, 1978; UNDRIP, 2007; UNDPAD, 2015).
- Knowledge about the mind, MINDFULNESS PRACTICES, AND CAPACITY TO HEAL, thrive, and grow (Clarke et al., 2021; Lee et. al., 2009; Lwanga, 2016).
- Increasing capacity and consistency in LOGICAL, MORAL, AND ETHICAL DECISIONS (Baffoe, 2020; Lwanga, 2016).
- Critiquing and dissolving barriers and SYNERGIZING MIGRATION, immigration, AND INTEGRATION WITH PERSONAL, SOCIO-POLITICAL. AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT towards inclusive sustainable wellbeing (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2025; Galabuzi, 2006; Grewal, 2020; Khan et al, 2022; Koebel & Pohler, 2020).
- SYSTEMS CHANGE AND APPLIED sociocultural and psychological RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT with people, in communities, institutions, and governments (Calvez & Cummings, 2022; Calvez & McInnes, 2020; Lwanga et al., 2019).
- Other perspectives on root causes of structural and systemic barriers.



3.3.4 STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS ESTABLISHED AS SMART GOALS

- On-going removal of structural barriers physical and invisible barriers (including legislation, policies and programs framed on wrong beliefs establishing **MULTIPLE LEVELS AND FORMS OF INTERVENTIONS** that align with universal human rights ideals, and healthy human and social nature, **INCLUDING INDIGENIZATION** as evidenced based practice through scientific facts and truth and reconciliation (TRC, 2015).
- **IDENTIFIABLE AND TRANSFORMATIVE NEW KNOWLEDGE, STRATEGIES, SKILLS, CONCEPT THEORIES AND PRACTICE THEORIES** supporting critical thinking and awareness of the potential in positive change, ability to reverse and compensate historical and persisting wrongs, healing, holistic growth sustainable development (Payne, 2014; Lwanga, 2016; Life skills collaborative, 2021).
- Supporting **SUSTAINABLE HEALING, WELLBEING**, life satisfaction, sense of belonging, human, socio-political, and economic development as part of qualitative and quantitative evidence-based outcomes (Olafsson, 2013), and **MEASUREMENT of RDEI OUTCOMES**.



3.4 Beyond the Concepts: The Application of UHRPT Framework for Diverse Audiences

In an evolving, open-minded culture, truth, reconciliation, and solutions that support healing from human rights violations, the removal of inhumane values, beliefs, practices, and policies are continuously explored. Additionally, the establishment of physical interventions as part of larger structural and systemic solutions in alignment with intentional and responsive platforms of human and social nature is important. This section outlines who and how to embark on this work within the context of “self” and others in leadership and professional practice, in public service.

3.4.1 WHO: WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

Large institutions including municipal and other levels of governments and public institutions	Educators, through course evaluation and updates, course development and teaching enhancements.	Employers and employees engaged in ongoing professional training as part of annual certification
Community organizations advancing social justice as part of evidence based sustainable development	Diverse groups of people at various stages of healing and readiness for change	Leaders who are ready to embark on the process of change and who are aware of the resistance to change

3.4.2. HOW: WHAT DOES THIS PROCESS ENTAIL?

A case example in Appendix 7.1 provides a sample of the phases, steps, and processes that were involved in the 14-week series of knowledge transmission and mobilization (KTMb) workshops held at the City of Saskatoon, towards building and establishing a human rights culture. The steps undertaken in this strategic change management initiative are illustrated in Figure 8.

Transformative teaching/learning, participatory action research, appreciative inquiry, critical thinking and self-reflection, creativity and innovation as an on-going process of positive change and as part of lifelong learning.

Intentional, impactful, and negotiated interventions at multiple levels. Vital to these interventions are baseline data to begin with and on-going measurements to establish evidence of change: healing in relationships, well-being, and sustainable human, socio-political, and economic development

Evaluation and refinement of UHRPT, the framework, and interventions during and over time.

Monitoring and measuring healing and sustainable human, socio-political, and economic development in a deepening, ongoing way.

3.4.3: EXPECTED OUTCOME

Established institutional leadership committed to the removal of structural and systemic barriers because they understand their direct and indirect cost in people’s lives, in family dynamics, and how they undermine sustainable human, social, and economic development of the entire society.

In addition to the UHRPT, this leadership will be armed with the following resources:

A shared understanding of the root causes of systemic barriers; their historical and persisting nature.

Ability to advance related policy changes within the institution and externally and, to measure impact on the whole society- ensuring no further harm and positive outcomes for all constituents.

A shared understanding of the need for multiple strategic interventions; able to allocate resources for direct and indirect needs (such as housing, drug addictions, human rights educational and related human science, historical, factual -truth and reconciliation information), and to monitor the impact from the investments—qualitative and quantitative outcome variables such as improvement in a sense of belonging and life satisfaction among all and various resident groups, plus related economic improvements such as the tax-base, an increase in stable and population growth, and to undertake comparative analysis on an ongoing basis beyond the traditional EDI measures that are limited to numbers.

4. Conclusions and Limitations

UHRPT is about change as a process.

All parts—diverse leaders (people), institutions, and communities—are engaged.

Significance of this work: Change, social innovation, holistic and sustainable development

- It offers a practice theory for diverse audiences and contexts.
- It is grounded in universal human rights (UHRs) as the ideal standard in research, healing, and development work and is intended to advance healing, remove historical and persisting human rights violations, and support sustained personal, socio-political, and economic change.
- It draws on and enhances UNESCO and UniGraz’s Human Rights Go Local program that prioritizes human rights objectives by adding principles and values and by shaping them into practice theory as well as incorporating holistic, measurable outcomes supporting sustainable well-being for all of humanity (UNESCO, 2023).
- It exposes the progress coupled with gaps, inconsistencies, and flaws in “race”-based legislation, strategies, policies, and programs during the first quarter of the 21st century.
- It offers opportunities for the creation of new knowledge through participatory action and applied research beyond the study of concepts and sociology.
- It focuses on change and development grounded in evidence-based theory, research, measuring impact and progress, and evaluating project designs and methodologies. In the process, it exposes flaws and gaps in initiatives addressing systemic barriers—strategic plans, policies, and programs that have been developed to eliminate racism—while inadvertently re-enforcing “race”-based thinking. For example, it exposes the flaws in the City of Saskatoon project, including the gap in focusing on systemic barriers while putting less emphasis on structural barriers when defining the problem.
- The UHRPT framework can be employed in work prioritizing other prohibited grounds of discrimination (besides “race” and racism).

Limitations

- Social change is often resisted as it creates fear among those who are comfortable and uninformed. Informed and 360° leadership development work in a safe environment that is grounded in the “why” of change is required in championing systemic and structural change.
- Lack of self-awareness: The equality of human dignity and worth is denied because of internalized oppression and domination.
- Apathy and unresolved anger: Internalized oppression related to intergenerational trauma from human rights abuses as part of human instincts and the need for safety and survival, persisting fear, suspicion, etc., requiring knowledge of trauma-informed practice and engagement in the pedagogy of the oppressed.
- Superiority complex: Internalized domination and sense of entitlement.
- Lack of knowledge, critical analysis, and strategy: The persistence of toxic culture, including language that draws on myths, wrong beliefs, and values illogically justified as liberating work that is meant to advance social justice.

5. Abbreviations, Terms, and Definitions

BMESS: Body-Mind-Emotions-Spirit-Social dimensions of “Self” and “Others” as the minimum awareness of human life as an inherent systems relationships and processes supporting sustainable well-being (Lwanga, 2016). Contemporary literature extends the five dimensions to nine as illustrated in Appendix 7.2, providing greater awareness of the complexity of human nature in interaction with the social environment and the need to balance strategies at multiple levels towards holistic and sustainable well-being.

Eastern philosophies expound on the dynamic dimensions of BMESS through the power of the mind at three levels, as expressed in the following quotation.

1. The power of mind not only lies in its instrumental functions and processes of rational decision-making problem solving, and also a source of discipline and healing.
2. A holistic view of the human mind should include the cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions, as all three dimensions are interconnected.
3. The human mind is also interconnected with the body processes (Lee et al., p. 98).

CC-UNESCO: Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

Identity: Identity, self-identity, other-identity and, “race” identity categorization as a part of socio-political and economic exclusionary processes that undermine self-image, self-esteem, self-respect, and inter-related mental and other aspects of health, and well-being (CIHI, 2025; Mullay & West, 2018).

KTMB.: Knowledge transmission and mobilization workshops. Originally, we had planned to hold knowledge mobilization (KMB.) workshops; however, institutional leaders explained the need to provide high level information / education on the essence of the United Nations Universal Declaration Human Rights, and the related scientific knowledge and facts.

MITACS: Originally known as Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems, MITACS is a Canadian nonprofit organization that partners with academia and the public and private sectors to fund work focused on applied industrial and social innovation to solve complex, real-life problems.

“Language-power and discourse” (Mullaly and West, 2018): As a term, it relates to the role of words (SHRC, 2013) and language in supporting the creation of the true or false reality in the human psyche. A lead scholar in the social justice field explained that language is like an invisible army of 100,000 soldiers maintaining the status quo or positions of power that are oblivious to an uninformed and unsuspecting mind, and one that is not actively engaged in critical thinking to evaluate the validity and consistency in what is written or stated. When employing the UHRPT framework, practitioners can engage in critical self-reflection by asking themselves questions, such as is this decision, action, program, legislation, etc., rational, moral, and ethical?

“Race” identity is lightly referred to as a social construct; however, history and reality reveal that it is consistently hierarchical and dehumanizing. This report refers to it as a socio-political and economic construct. Partsch (1982) described “race” categorizations as “a human group that defines itself and/or is defined by other groups as different from other groups by virtue of innate and immutable physical characteristics.” “Race” thinking and categorizations may align with the caste system in reference to people of diverse ethnic and culture heritage as “half-caste” based on hereditary traits such as hair texture, facial features, and skin-tone variation. Partsch (1982) work further distinguishes “race” as different from other prohibited grounds of discrimination under the UDHR (1948) and clarifies the need for the elimination of “race” identity and categorizations:

Invidious discrimination on the ground of sex, language or religion can be eliminated by the full realization and implementation of specific human rights. If equality between men and women in their full mutual relations, if linguistic freedoms, if freedom of religion and belief are fully guaranteed and if these guarantees are also implemented, discrimination on these grounds should disappear. There is a correlation between these specific freedoms and the possibility of discriminatory acts. In respect to “race” no such specific freedom exists. (p. 76)

Systemic racism: According to Senator Murray Sinclair, is when [the government and structural] systems are based upon and founded upon racist beliefs and philosophies and has put in place policies and practices that force even the non-racist to act in a racist way (University of Manitoba, 2025).

TLE-UL-TR-SO-SOW: Transcendent-Life-Energy (TLE) as Unconditional Love (UL) in Transformative Relations (TR) with Self-Others (SO) towards Subjective-Objective Well-Being (SOW), (Lwanga, 2016).

UHRPT: Universal human rights practice theory framework..

UN UDHR: United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UNIDPAD: International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024).

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7. Additional Resources

Appendix 7.1: A Case Example of the Application of the UHRPT Framework at the City of Saskatoon: Content, Process, and Immediate Outcomes

The Municipal Government of City of Saskatoon sought to establish a One City Road Map as a strategy to advance its Reconciliation Equity Diversity Inclusion (REDI) initiative through three of its departments: the City Clerk's office (with regards to culture, government institution-level change), Human Resources (internal-facing policy change), and Public Engagement (external-facing change). After a series of discussions that supported understanding the City's context and goals, the practice theory team and city officials agreed on a 14-week Knowledge Transmission and Mobilization (KTmb) workshop program. Workshop participants (18 community and senior, middle, junior city leaders) were carefully selected. They were assessed for their readiness to participate in transformative teaching and learning that would trigger pain from historical and persisting human rights abuse and for their level of healing (having overcome anger and being ready to embark on the healing journey). Participants were provided access to psychological support services, recognized as critical especially during the first phase of the program.

The KTmb workshops were organized in three phases covering three progressive learning and teaching objectives. **Phase I consisted of four weeks of immersion in understanding the historical and contemporary nature of structural and systemic discrimination and interrelated barriers undermining the Universal Declaration Human Rights (1948) standards.** Participants had the opportunity to reflect deeply on their personal and interpersonal experiences of unfair and dehumanizing treatment in their lives and the related implication of "first for self and then for others," as they occupied the positions of both the oppressed and the oppressor - coming to the recognition that everyone was engaged in the destructive processes.

Phase II consisted of six weeks of deeper case studies and real-life work situations of systemic and structural discrimination and barriers at institutional and cultural levels. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the nature and complexity of systemic and structural barriers, their root causes, and their impact with regards to undermining human development, interrelated poor personal, family, and societal relationships, and culture that promotes deepening exclusion of unfair treatment of some residents coupled with unfair privileges for others. They explored how these outcomes are manifested in social development at the city level, within the three departments. They critically reflected on interrelated social problems such as homelessness, increasing drug addiction, a lack of a sense of belonging, stagnated population growth and tax-base, lost opportunities, and undermined economic development. **This phase also supported the critique of established REDI initiatives and dialogue about the UHRPT framework and related skills and tools that unveil systems-based solutions, intersectionality of the different prohibited grounds of discrimination, and room for unravelling structural barriers.** Time was allowed to explore best practices in other cities.

The last four weeks were focused on the identification of concrete and multiple interventions that could be implemented in the three departments. Participants also explored SMART goals, relevant theories, tools, and skills in the midst of the awareness of resistance to change. Additionally, they identified related relevant measures of anticipated change and the need for base-line data and tools to track progress in REDI outcomes as part of on-going change were covered.

Each KTmb workshop was three hours long and consisted of 15–30-minute short presentations, group discussions, reporting back to the general group with recommendations on strategic intervention, anticipated outcomes, and positive follow-up actions organized as short, medium, and long-term. Group discussions consisted of a combination of random groupings, departmental teams, levels of management, prohibited grounds of discrimination, etc. Participants were encouraged to listen to workshop recordings, engage in personal critical self-reflection in their personal lives and professional roles, and to do personal reading on selected topics. They had opportunities to share insights gained, acquire new skills, gain access to tools supporting ongoing transformative teaching and learning, evaluation of beliefs and values, and character development.

Appendix 7.1 (continued)

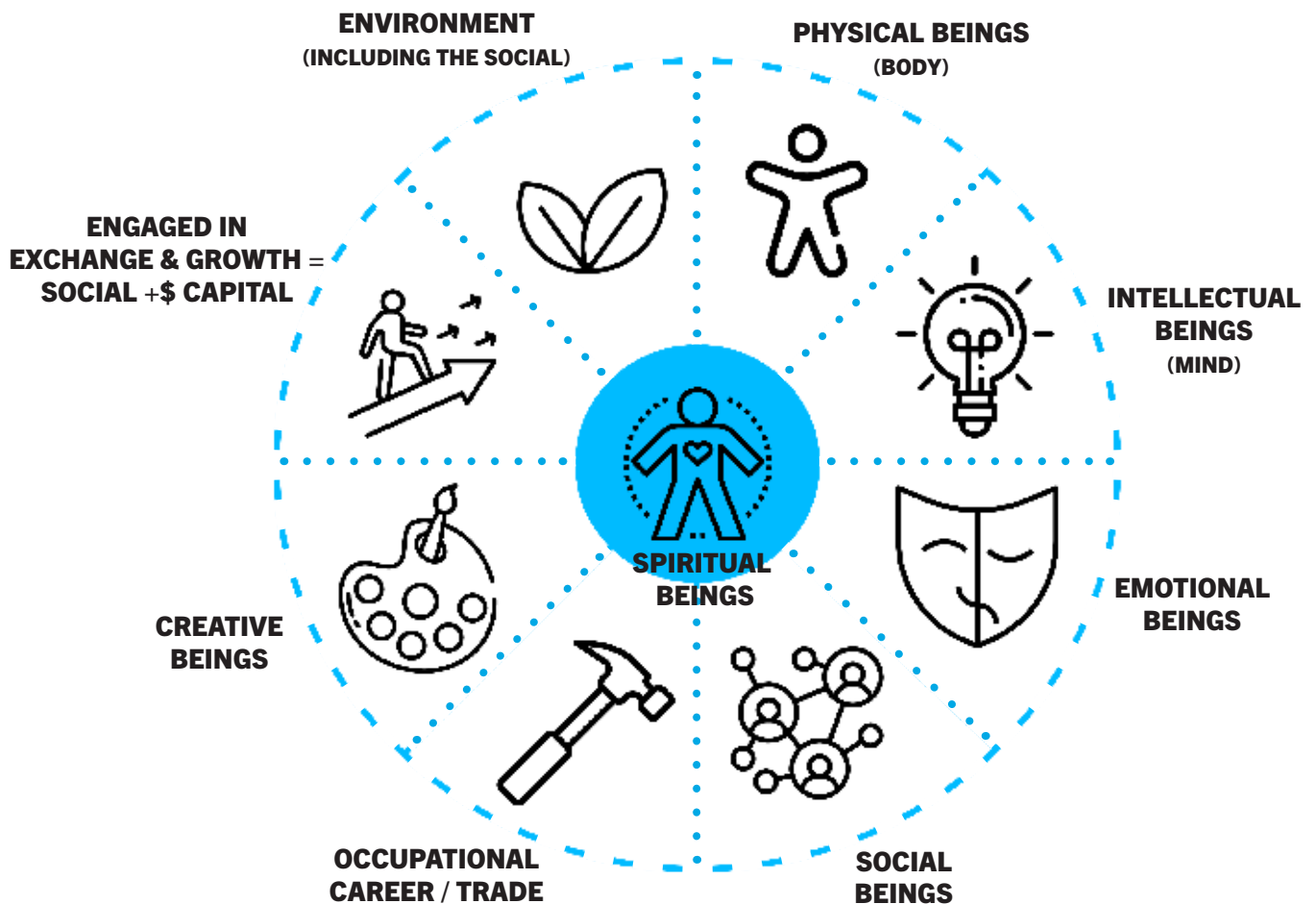
KTMB Workshop Topics

Week	Workshop Topic
Phase I	Sitting in a place of discomfort to support deep critical reflection and evaluation of beliefs & values
1	Part A: Setting the Stage & Sample Format - Institutional Introductions (15 minutes). - Opening reflections by an Indigenous Elder (10 minutes) - Project overview and ice breaker (10 minutes) - Break-out group discussion: Establishing project principles and ground rules (15-minute team building activity). - Reporting back (10 minutes) - Overview of the Leadership and Professional Practice Program (10 minutes) - Break (15 minutes) Part B: - Introduction of human rights values and ongoing measurement of REDI outcomes (15 minutes). - PowerPoint slides: Safety and safe spaces: Individuals, families, workplaces, communities, society (10 minutes). - Break-out group discussion on the relevancy and application of Human Rights values in the workplace (15 minutes). - Reporting back (10 minutes) - Final questions and reflections on projects, and a preview of next week (10 minutes)
2	History of Colonization, Decolonizing Our Narratives in Relation to Indigenous Peoples & Self - Canadian immigration policies; Systemic barriers facing newcomers
3	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination: Systemic Barriers - Deepening our understanding of the multiple levels & forms of discrimination (recognizable as oppression/ domination) from structural and systemic barriers through “race” and corresponding racism
4	Multiple Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination, Levels/Forms of Structural/Systemic Oppression & Intersectionality - Social identities and exclusion: Identity, the mind, safety and sustainable well-being
Phase II	Transitioning into a Response from the Heart, Understanding, and Intent
5	Key Concepts in Critical Anti-Opressive and Anti-Privilege Theory and Practice: Internalized Domination and Internalized Oppression - Begin working within specific groups, based on departments (areas of work) and areas of prohibited grounds of discrimination
6	- Ethics and human rights in professional practice - Understanding the role of the self in ethical and professional communication and practice. - Key concepts in crisis intervention, systemic barriers, root causes, and trauma-informed practice
7	- Field visit, City of Saskatoon - Respect of diversity starting with self: Increasing awareness of self and others: Knowing your dominant personal communication style and related application in professional practice - Session included: - Real-life Case study discussions - Learning about diversity as a resource: Tools and strategies enhancing teamwork and establishing synergy
8	Identifying Problems Using the Crisis/Intervention/Root Causes Framework (i.e., Waterfall/ Mid-stream, and Drowning scenarios) and Moving Toward Deeper and Impactful Solutions - Group discussions on department-specific case examples, panel presentation on prospective solutions and related practice theory - Human rights principles, values and objectives: Human nature as part of systems-based knowledge and solutions
9	Change Management: Resistance to change as a natural response -Identifying related challenges, strategies and interventions towards sustainable, positive change.
10	Systemic Barriers based on Gender, SOGIESC, and Diverse Abilities - Reflecting on and refining area-specific strategies and interventions - Overcoming “one-size-fits-all” policies, “accommodation” mindsets, and “competing rights” framing
Phase III	Intervention Strategies Employing SMART Goals, Base-Line Data and Ongoing Measuring of Impact Towards Enhanced REDI in Respective Departments
11	Preparing for Change: Review of Institutional Organizational Change Management Principles, Values, and Strategies - Department-level discussion groups to consider the importance of workplace politics, and discuss how to apply organizational change management principles to meet their area-specific goals - Case examples of successful and failed change projects; importance of communication and buying in; change as a process
12	Identifying Critical Key Indicators (Variables) of Needed Change, Measurement of Impact and Valid Measurement Tools of Variables and Challenges in Research - Qualitative and quantitative data and value in employing both methods (mixed methods in applied research). - Institutional research policy and practice; room for evaluation and improvement; case examples.
13	Concretizing Areas Specific Interventions as 5-10-15-Year Strategic Goals, Identifying Related SMART Goals and Related Stakeholder Engagement - Presentation of departmental intervention proposed plans
14	Wrap-Up - Presentation of departmental intervention proposed plans, continued. - Wrap-up of KTMB workshops and - Presentation of Certificates of Contribution

Out of 18 participants, 15 completed the 14-week KTMB workshops. The key outcome was the City REDI Team adopting a reconciliation and human rights framework as a key strategy to enhance REDI outcomes. City leadership staff is equipped with knowledge, skills, and tools and they are aware of measurement tools that are beyond traditional EDI percentages –such as the measurement of sense of belonging and life-satisfaction, and the importance of ongoing measurement of the impact of various interventions advancing social justice.

For more information on this case example, visit <https://umanitoba.ca/social-work/MITACS-project>.

Appendix 7.2: Nine Interconnected Dimensions of Self and Other, supporting Holistic and Sustainable Well-Being in the Context of Professional Public Service



Adapted from various models of dimensions of well-being that range between 8 and 9 within the context of UHRPT and the underlying philosophy. The presented model situates spirituality at the center as the core and balancing dimension (Lwanga, 2016).