

Housing Central and Black History Month: Our Commitment to Leading Change

As Black History Month draws to a close, we have both been reflecting on the work of our incredible teams in shedding light on historical and modern day “hidden figures” in the Black community in British Columbia and Canada.

Why did we feel it was important to celebrate Black History Month? 2020 was undoubtedly a year of reckoning in race relations. We all watched in horror as the events surrounding George Floyd’s murder in the United States unfolded, and we also took inspiration from the Black Lives Matter protests that emerged in response – not just in North America but around the world.

Here in Canada, it became impossible to maintain the illusion that our own racism manifests in subtler and less sinister ways. With the help of advocates like [Hogan’s Alley Society](#), we learned through the [2020 homeless count](#) how systemic racism has contributed to the disproportionate number of Black people in Metro Vancouver experiencing homelessness. And viewed through an equity lens, every meaningful indicator – health, education, income, or employment – leads to one inescapable conclusion: racism is a fundamental characteristic of our social, economic and political systems, and always has been.

As partners in Housing Central, we made a commitment to provide training to our staff to help understand and recognize racism, and to make a conscious effort to confront it. But in truth, our staff have educated us; they have helped us understand our own role in perpetuating racism and our responsibility to lead change that is long overdue.

We have had some tough conversations this year – in our own organizations and within the broader community housing sector. We are committed to continuing those conversations, but more importantly, we are committed to action as we look for ways to foster deeper and more meaningful inclusion in the community housing world.

Tough conversations are a big part of the reckoning we are witnessing, but so is recognition. Black History Month has given us an opportunity to recognize the meaningful, and often ignored, contributions that Black Canadians have made to our communities.

Our journey down this path is just beginning. We hope you will join us.



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