

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE?

Bullying and harassment are broad terms that include inappropriate conduct or comments toward a worker that were known to cause them to feel humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment is an extension of this behaviour and can exist on a spectrum – it can be demonstrated as unwelcome verbal, non-verbal, or physical activity of a sexual nature that can make a person feel threatened, intimidated, offended, or humiliated.

Sometimes people don't realize just what's happening. Anyone can face unwanted sexual attention — men, women, or non-binary people and members of LGBTQ2S+. In fact, treating others differently because of their gender identity or expression can be a form of sexual harassment.

HOW DOES SEXUAL HARASSMENT HAPPEN?

Sexual Harassment can occur due to a variety of reasons...

- Gender imbalance in positions of power
- Male dominated work environment
- Jobs that are seen as 'subservient' or often occupied by Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups
- Isolated work environments
- Workplace tolerance of sexual harassment
- Workplace cultures where ruthless competition or "dominator" culture prevails
- Toxic workplace environment
- Passivity in leadership

WHO IS COMMONLY TARGETED?

New employees, lower paid employees, women, people of colour, members of LGBTQ2S+ communities, new immigrants, Indigenous peoples, those that face oppression and marginalization.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS?

The impacts of sexual harassment can be far-reaching and are not always immediately known. They may include:

- Mental health issues such as: Lack of concentration, PTSD, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations.
- Spiritual: lack of connection or apathy to previously held spiritual beliefs
- Physical: isolation from loved ones, no motivation, headaches, lack of sleep

Research shows that workplace sexual harassment has real consequences for both employees and employers

NATIVE COURTWORKER
AND COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF BC



NATIVE COURTWORKER
AND COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF BC

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ENDING WORKPLACE HARASSMENT CONTACT:

Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC

604-985-5355 | nccabc.ca

Community Legal Assistance Society

604 673 3143 | clasbc.net

Sharp Workplaces | 604 673 3143

ENDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Financé par le
gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

Impacts on workers include physical and mental health issues, like burnout, continued fear of being victimized, retaliation, judgement from others, missed work, unemployment and reduced opportunities for advancement and training.

There may be long-term effects that include PTSD and impact on work and personal relationships.

Impacts on employers include: unhealthy working environment, reduced productivity, employee turnover, increased absences, distrust of the organization, bad publicity and legal costs.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Workplace sexual harassment can be a pattern of behaviour, and sometimes, it's made up of seemingly small incidents that culminate.

Individuals can have multiple overlapping identities which further influence their experiences of discrimination and oppression. This means that different aspects of a person's position – such as being a woman and being a person of colour facing discrimination, racism, interact together to create a cumulative effect. This is also true in the case of workplace sexual harassment.

Research shows that certain groups of women are more targeted or experience specific forms of workplace sexual harassment, in particular: people of colour, gender diverse, and Indigenous people. Sexual harassment is not about sexual attraction gone wrong: it is about the abuse of power and control.

WORKPLACE RESPONSIBILITIES

Most workplaces have policies in place for the differing levels of severity of sexual harassment, which may vary from Human Resources intervention, training, and meetings with those involved, to firing of staff who are responsible for perpetuating sexual harassment. This may vary in the workplace. If the workplace does not respond in a timely manner, or ultimately assist the victim in an appropriate and effective way, they become liable when victims take legal action.

Artwork by: Jocelyn Williams

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Informed, ongoing, voluntary agreements without the use of pressure or coercion to engage in sexual activities.

INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW

There are many different Indigenous nations to Turtle Island, many with their own cultural practices and ways of being. There are common cultural values that are shared across Turtle Island based on love and respect. An example of this is the Seventh Generation principle, it demonstrates how each decision we make can and will impact the earth, ourselves and future generations. This teaching can help guide our practices and everyday choices, ensuring we are always doing our best for all our relations.

Relationships should be based on relationality, respect, and reciprocity. These values in the workplace, as we are in close relationship with one another and are often working together on shared goals.

The Seven Grandfather teachings also include, the principles of Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility and Wisdom. These teachings can help guide our thoughts, decisions and actions.

The four quadrants of Medicine Wheel are another example of Indigenous worldview on how to live in a balanced and good way. If you're walking through life in a good way, you are not participating in sexual violence. The medicine wheel is a circle and represents the way Indigenous peoples view the world, as all things are connected and work together. It is important to strive for harmony and balance. It represents interconnectivity with yourself, with the natural world, and with others. The four quadrants represent the four aspects of us: mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional which all need to be balanced to stay healthy and happy.

EMPLOYER RESOURCES

Worksafe:

Bullying and Harassment Resource Tool Kit:

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/hazardsexposures/bullying-harassment/resource-tool-kit>

Canadian Human Rights Commission: Developing anti-harassment policy:

<https://www.chrccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/template-developing-anti-harassment-policy>

Government of BC: Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/humanrights/human-rights-protection/sex-discrimination-harassment.pdf>

RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS:

VictimLinkBC:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/victimsof-crime/victimlinkbc>

SHARP:

<https://clasbc.net/get-legal-help/sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/>

Crisis line: <https://www.crisislines.bc.ca/services>

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A WITNESS?

Step in, say something without endangering the survivor of the abuse. Educate yourself on the policies and practices in place at your place of work in order to assist those who are targets of workplace harassment. Know your rights as an employee.

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A SURVIVOR?

- Let someone you trust know what is happening
- Contact crisis support
- Contact a mental health professional
- Make a report that follows your workplace sexual harassment policy
- Make a workplace BC report
- Contact a restorative justice program/organization
- Contact your local Native Courtworker for support and referrals

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH THIS ALONE

You are not alone. You can reach out to a professional who is trained to give emotional support — for example, this could mean crisis support or a mental health professional. This service may be free through your extended health benefits or the First Nations Health Authority. You'll find more options at counsellingbc.com. Even if you were "just" a witness, you may still need this kind of help.