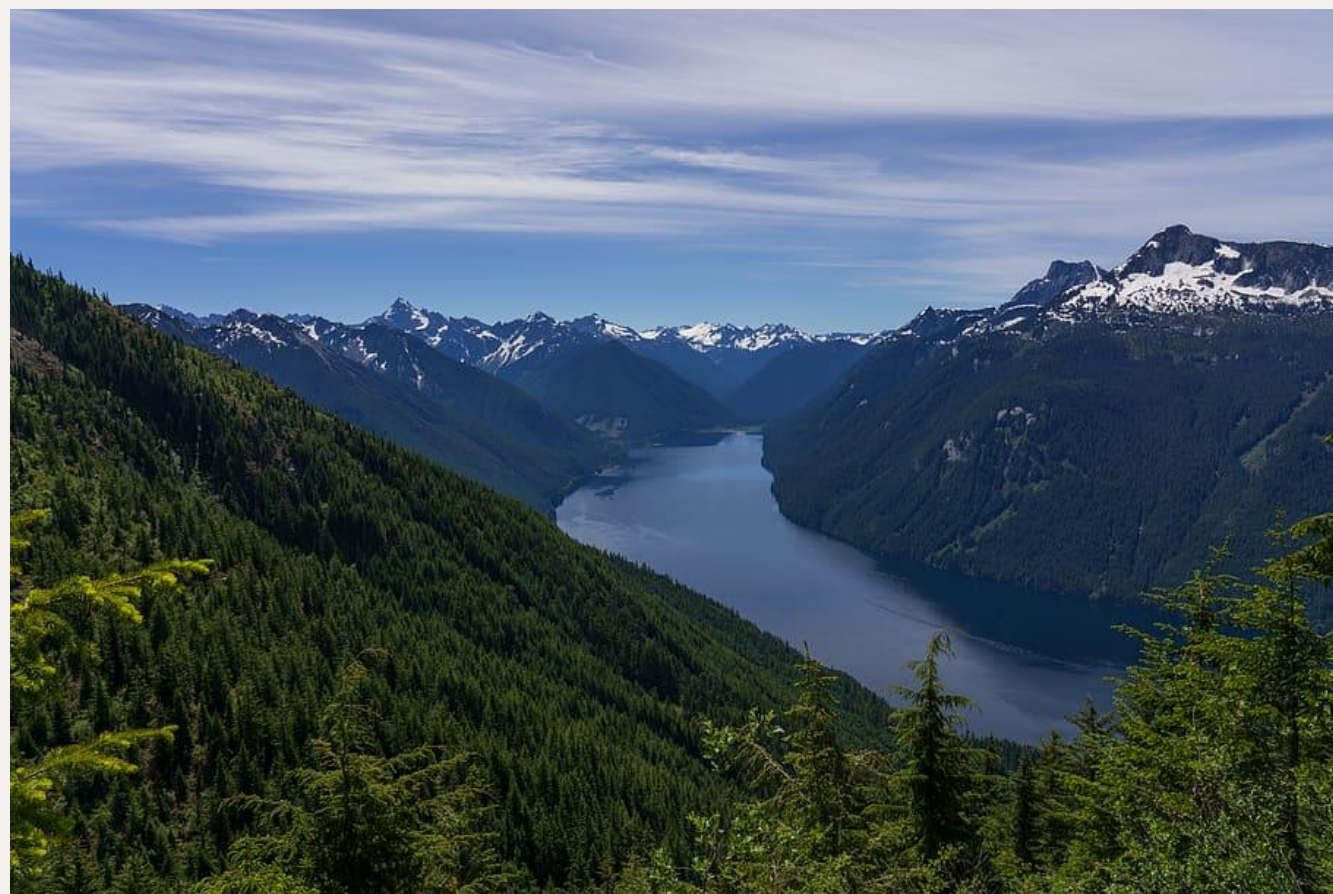# BCLA Anti-Racism Project

Conference Report Back and Update

April 2023

the commons

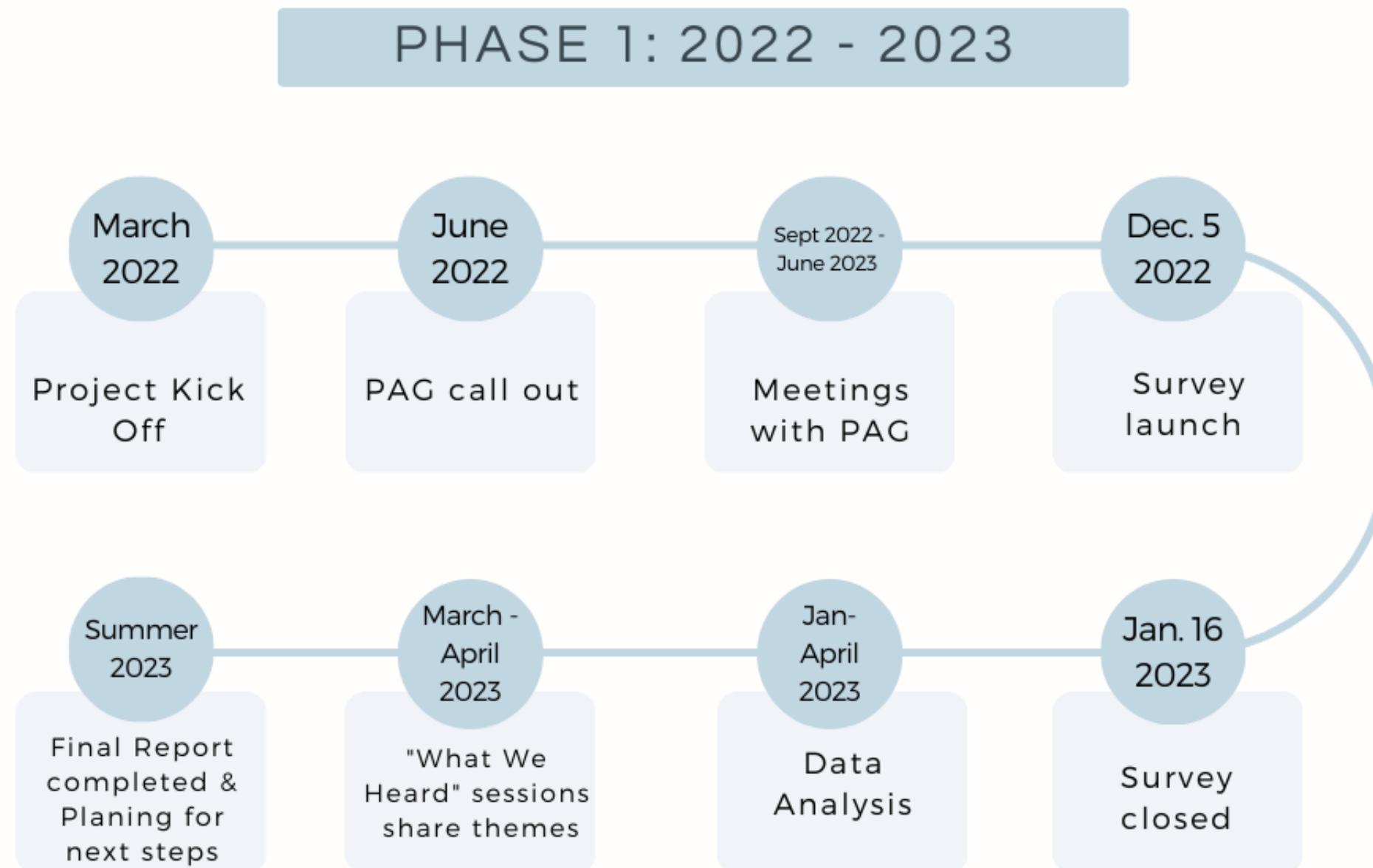# Land Statement

xʷməθkʷəy̓əm

hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ (Downriver)

Agenda

1. Land Acknowledgement

2. Background

3. Key Themes and Survey Data

4. Case Studies

5. Future Directions

6. Questions

Background & Timeline

PHASE 1: 2022 - 2023

March 2022 — Project Kick Off

June 2022 — PAG call out

Sept 2022 - June 2023 — Meetings with PAG

Dec. 5 2022 — Survey launch

Jan. 16 2023 — Survey closed

Jan-April 2023 — Data Analysis

March - April 2023 — "What We Heard" sessions share themes

Summer 2023 — Final Report completed & Planing for next steps

If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Lilla Watson,
Murri visual artist,
academic, activist

Tensions and Challenges

- Role of BCLA as member-based organization
- Leading systemic change while respecting the autonomy of individual libraries
- Incidents of racism within BCLA vs. incidents of racism in the sector
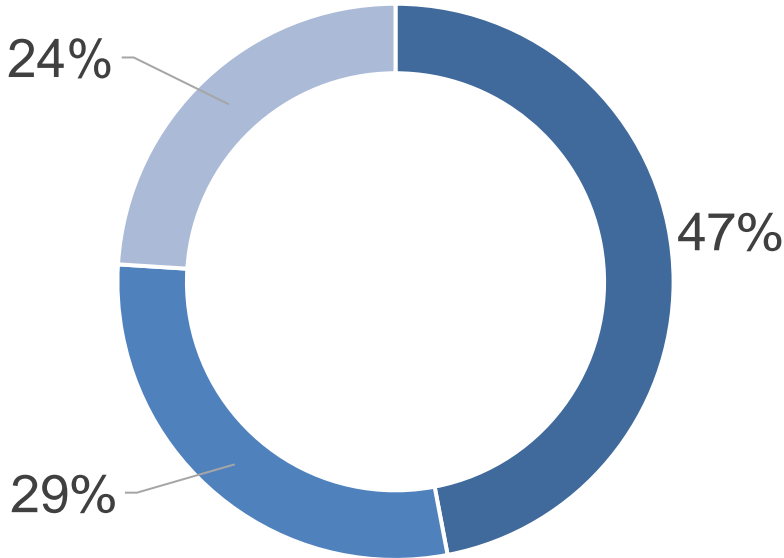- Balancing recommendations that address both individual and structural forms of racism

Survey Demographics

Total responses: 192
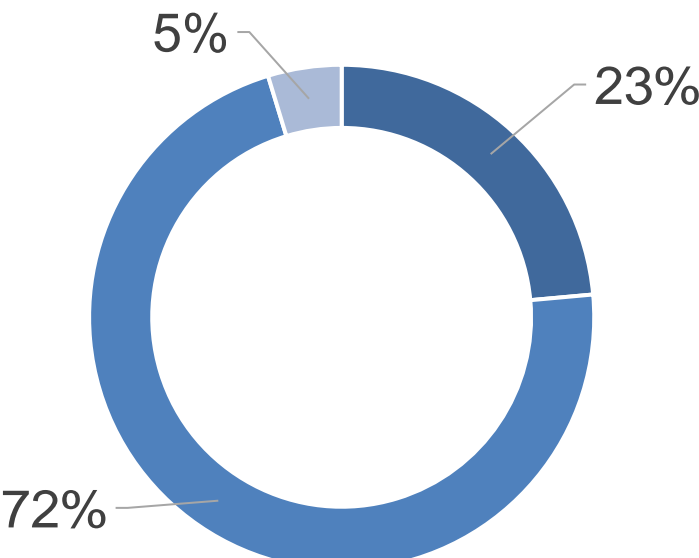
- 111 complete
- 81 partial

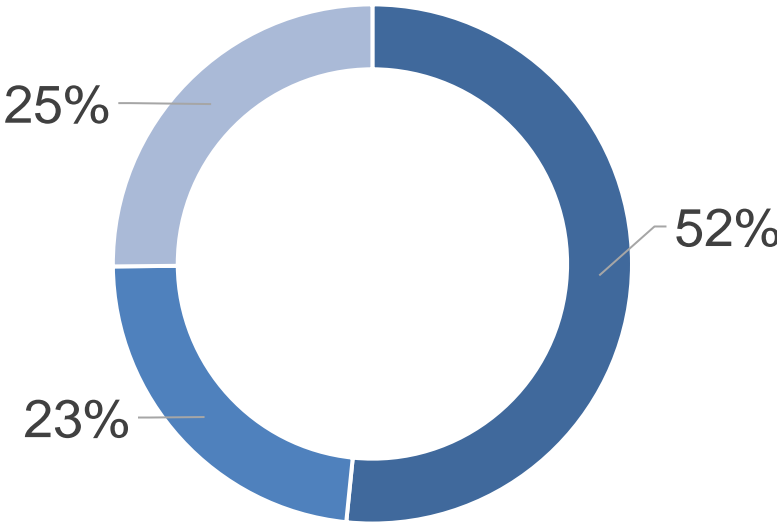| Regions	Number	Percentage
Lower Mainland	92	47%
Island	56	29%
Rest of BC (North East, Kootenays, North Coast, Thompson Okanagan, Cariboo, Nechako Valley)	46	24%

Respondents by Region

- Lower Mainland — 47%
- Vancouver Island — 29%
- The Rest of BC — 24%

Respondent Identity
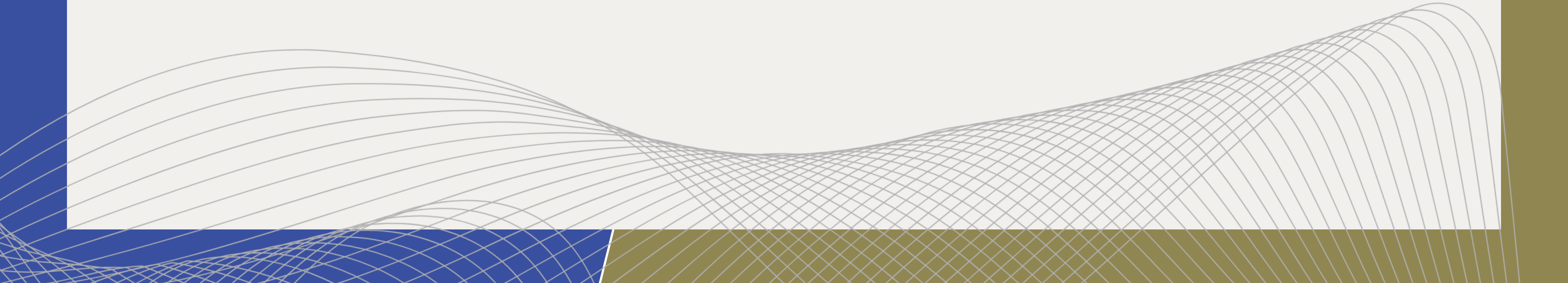
- IBPOC — 23%
- Non-IBPOC — 72%
- Prefer not to Answer — 5%

Respondents by Membership

- Current Member — 52%
- Former Member — 23%
- Non-member — 25%

Key Themes

1. Representation: Listening and Valuing IBPOC perspectives

2. Accountability and Acknowledgement: Taking Action

3. Membership Engagement

4. Education and Resources

Representation: Listening & Valuing IBPOC Perspectives

- **32%** of IBPOC respondents felt that "BCLA did not respect the time and representation of IBPOC members within the BC library community."

- IBPOC respondents expressed concerns about burnout, being asked to do anti-racism work and being expected to take on the emotional labour of the work without adequate resources or compensation
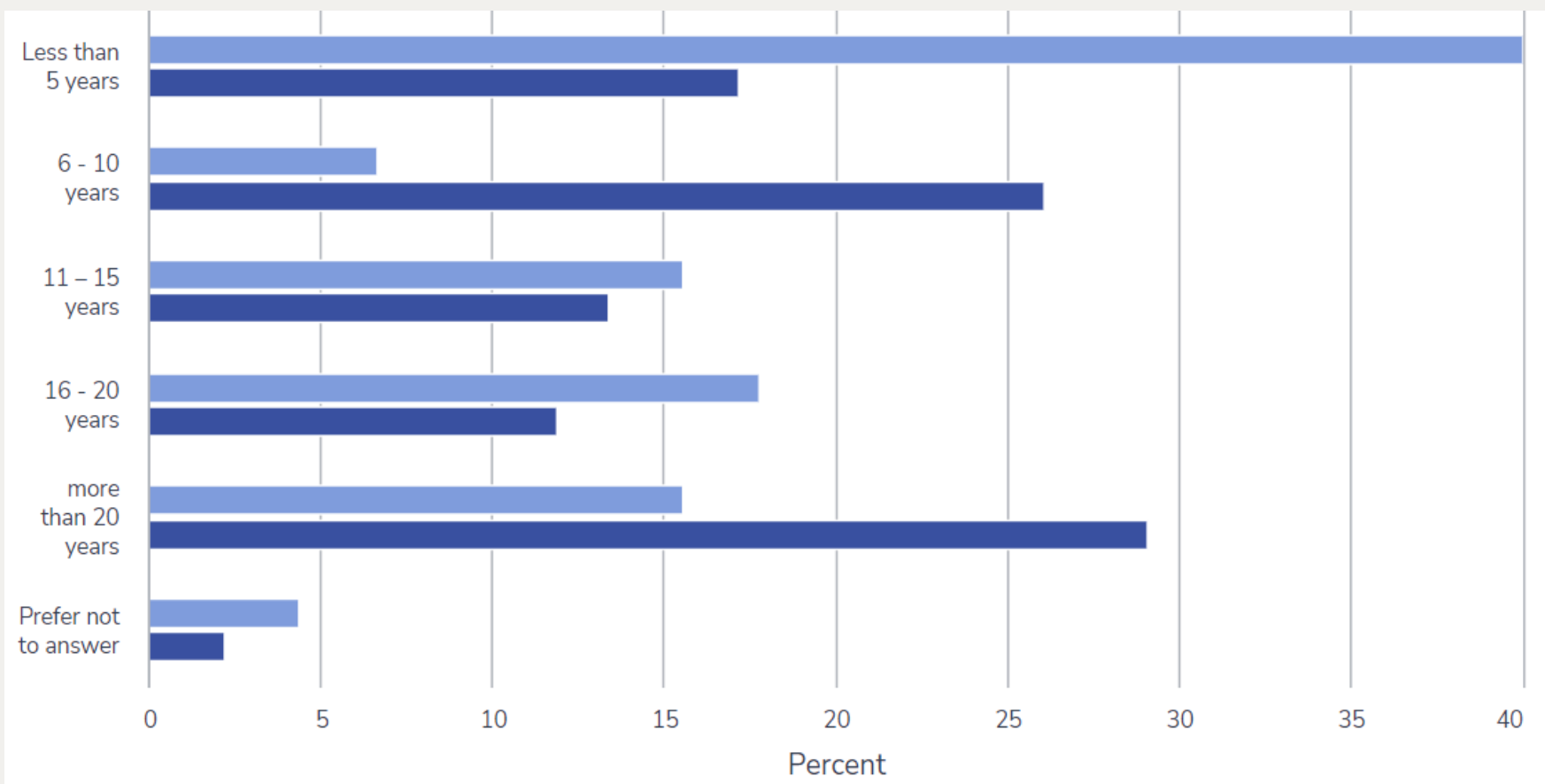
Career Stage	IBPOC	Non-IBPOC
Less than 5 years	40%	17.2%
More than 20 years	15.6%	29.1%
Manager	8.9%	17.9%
Senior Management	6.7%	10.4%

■ IBPOC

■ Non-IBPOC

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Member Engagement

Education and Resources

- **50%** of IBPOC respondents said that their racial or cultural identity and lived experienced influenced their decision to not be a member

IBPOC and non-IBPOC respondents agreed that the top three priorities for BCLA's anti-racism initiatives should be:

1. Mentorship opportunities for staff, Board, and members who identify as IBPOC
2. Outreach efforts to actively seek to increase the racial and cultural diversity of its members
3. Provide resources and opportunities for learning and meaningful allyship to IBPOC communities.

Accountability and Acknowledgement: Taking Action

- **55%** of racist incidents took place at a BCLA event (e.g. conference)

- **59%** of non-IBPOC respondents felt they could **not** provide insight into BCLA's anti-racism efforts citing a lack of lived experience as a IBPOC person.

- **16%** of non-IBPOC respondents **strongly agreed** that BCLA was currently an inclusive environment for IBPOC members

Survey Question	Answer	IBPOC	Non-IBPOC
BCLA is currently a welcoming and inclusive environment for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC).	I don't know	24.4%	56%
BCLA respects the time and representation of Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC) members within the BC library community.	I don't know	19.5%	60.8%
Historically, BCLA has been a welcoming and inclusive environment for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC).	I don't know	34.1%	61.3%

Answers	IBPOC
Experienced racism	21.60%
Witnessed racism	27.0%
Had not experienced racism	54.10%

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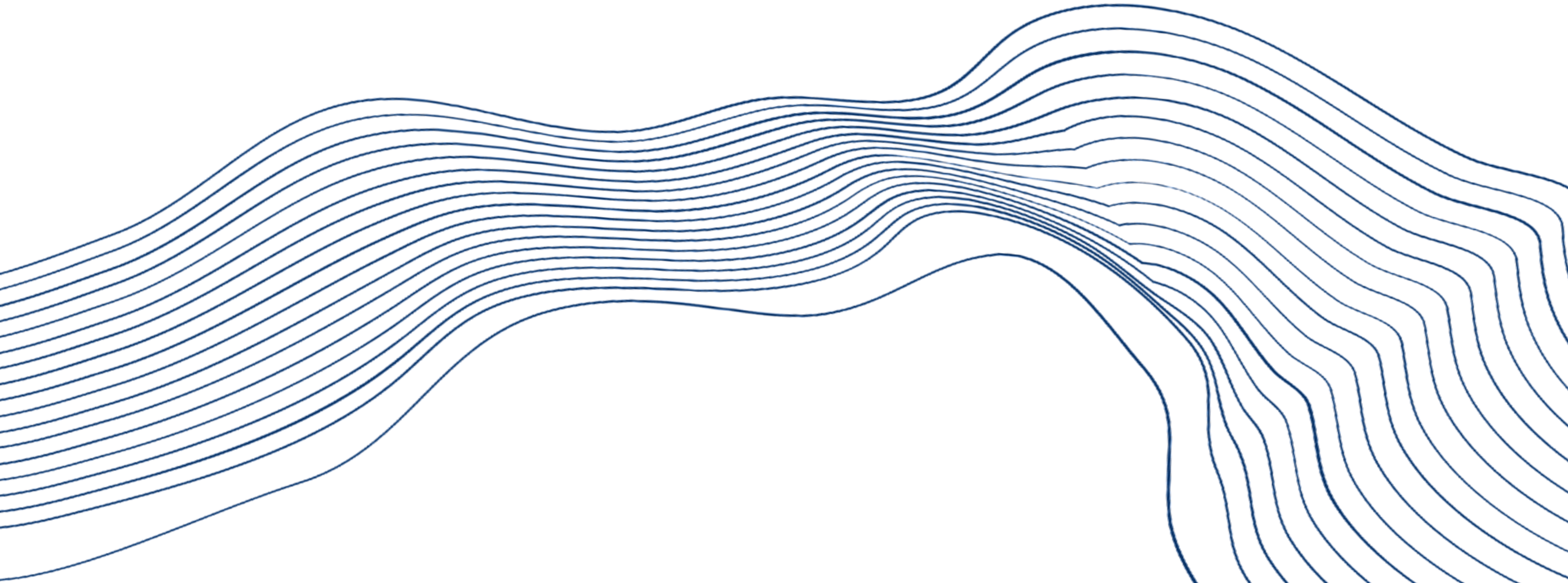
CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1

Selena (White) is a librarian who has been in her career for over 15 years. She regularly attends events and conferences to connect face-to-face with other library professionals. However, because of the pandemic she has not been able to leave her community for several years and she is looking forward to attending the upcoming conference in person.

Selena's interest in anti-racism work grew out of her understanding of intersectionality, privilege and oppression. With the support of her library leadership, she has been using her professional development funds to take EDI-related workshops. As a woman who identifies as queer and working class, she recognizes that some groups in society are oppressed and that others benefit from this oppression. Most people have experienced both privilege and oppression at some point in their life. She also sees how systems, including libraries, contribute to privileging some identities at the expense of others. This interconnectedness is what drew her to focus on learning how to be an anti-racist ally.

Selena, albeit new to anti-racism, has committed to learning about how systemic racism surfaces within the library system, she also humbly commits to the personal learning that's required of anti-racism. This includes knowing that as a leader, learning is more than just text books - it's also challenging the ways racism shows up as racial biases, stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination in her own attitudes and actions. This also includes finding ways to approach the topic with her other colleagues.

Case Study 1

As Selena is catching up with some of her colleagues, they start to talk about some of the anti-racism initiatives that are in the works at their libraries and they begin to talk about how much change the library sector has seen since they first began their careers.

Robyn (White), who Selena has known for several years says "libraries have so many more responsibilities these days. I'm not sure about how we're expected to also take on anti-racism work, we barely have enough funding to keep the lights on." Another colleague (White) adds "well, it's really up to the IBPOC staff to lead initiatives, we're just here to listen and learn."

Neither comments sit well with Selena but she is unsure how to respond. Her own library is underfunded and she knows many of her colleagues struggle with workloads that are already overwhelming but she also knows that anti-racism work must be prioritized and cannot only be the responsibility of IBPOC staff.

Case Study Themes:

Listening and Valuing IBPOC Perspectives | Accountability and Action

"it's up to IBPOC staff to lead initiatives, we're just here to listen and learn"

"Libraries have so many more responsibilities these days. I'm not sure about how we're expected to also take on anti-racism work, we barely have enough funding to keep the lights on."

- **55%** of instances of racism took place at a BCLA event (e.g. conference)

- **59%** of non-IBPOC respondents felt they could **not** provide insight into BCLA's anti-racism efforts citing a lack of lived experience as a IBPOC person.

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Potential Interventions

- Challenge racial bias by asking Robyn to clarify their statements, express concern that their comments would imply that anti-racism work isn't important, remind them that antiracism work is a responsibility for all of them as library professionals.

- Selena may need to directly address white fragility with her colleague if Robyn begins to get defensive. She may also be concerned about possible reprisals or push back.

- Selena can talk about how she become involved in anti-racism work as a white person (working on being an ally) and how it is directly connect to her work

- Share resources she has been using to educate herself on anti-racism in libraries. She could also suggest that they collectively read some books or articles that address systemic racism in libraries.

- Selena could encourage her colleagues to take actionable steps towards anti-racism, such as attending training, workshops, or signing up for online courses that educate about systemic racism in libraries.

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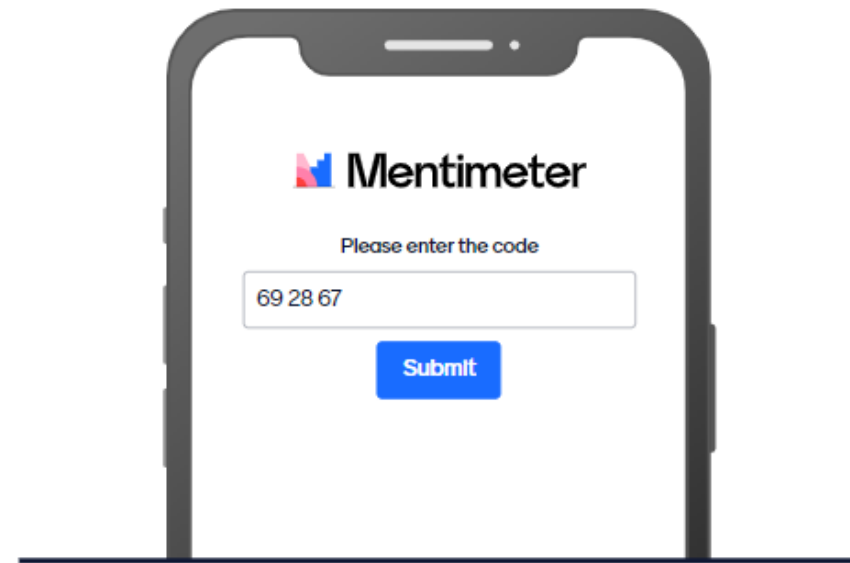
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Or use QR code

Menti Question:

What opportunities are there to create systemic change?

Q1: What opportunities are there to create systemic change?

Mentimeter

Click here to view answers

Press ENTER to stop scrolling

Case Study 2

Samantha (Person of Colour) is 4 years into her career and recently attained a full-time librarian position. Samantha has good rapport with her colleagues and is one of the few people of colour on staff. Most of the library staff recognize the importance of addressing anti-racism and have created a committee to help develop anti-racism initiatives within the library. Samantha is invited to join the committee.

At a meeting, Samantha proposes a project that would address the lack of diversity in the library's collection development policies. She presented a plan that would involve racialized librarians reviewing and auditing the library's collection and making policy recommendations for purchasing more books by IBPOC authors. She highlights how the project aligns with the committees' goals and the importance of creating long-lasting systemic change.

The committee listens attentively and Cherry (White) a supervisor, notes that leading a taskforce is a big undertaking and raises concerns that the project might require more resources than the committee has available this quarter. Paul (White) adds that the library already has one of the bigger collections of books by IBPOC authors compared to other libraries. Paul recalls an event series that Serena (another Person of Colour who no longer works at the library) organized last year highlighting local IBPOC authors that was well attended by IBPOC library patrons. Paul suggests that it might be a more effective use of resources to do another event series.

Case Study 2

This is not the first time one of Samantha's project proposals have been turned down and Samantha questions whether her ideas and perspective are valued by the committee especially after they invited her to be part of the committee. She is tired of having to constantly explain herself and is losing motivation to continue advocating for change within the organization.

Samantha is also disappointed that Paul did not offer to help organize the event series despite suggesting it. She feels like the burden of doing anti-racism work is falling solely on her shoulders, and that she is not being adequately supported or listened to by her colleagues

Case Study
Listening and Valuing IBPOC Perspectives | Accountability and Action

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"This is not the first time one of Samantha's project proposals have been turned down and Samantha questions whether her ideas and perspective are valued by the committee especially after they invited her to be part of the committee. She is tired of having to constantly explain herself and is losing motivation to continue advocating for change within the organization."

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Senior Management	6.7%	10.4%

Potential Interventions

The committee could
- Advocate for more funding for their work and ask that EDI and anti-racism work be included as line items in the year's budget to accommodate Samantha's project
- Weigh the options of doing one larger initiative instead of several smaller initiatives
- When choosing projects to prioritize, the committee can evaluate the project for long term impacts on systemic change

Bystander Interventions:
- Another member of the committee could have voiced support for Samantha, advocated for the project's approval, offered to collaborate with Samantha on the project
- Listen and believe IBPOC folks

Self Reflection Questions:
- What pieces of work can be taken on by non-IBPOC folks?
- How can members of the committee begin a process of repair?

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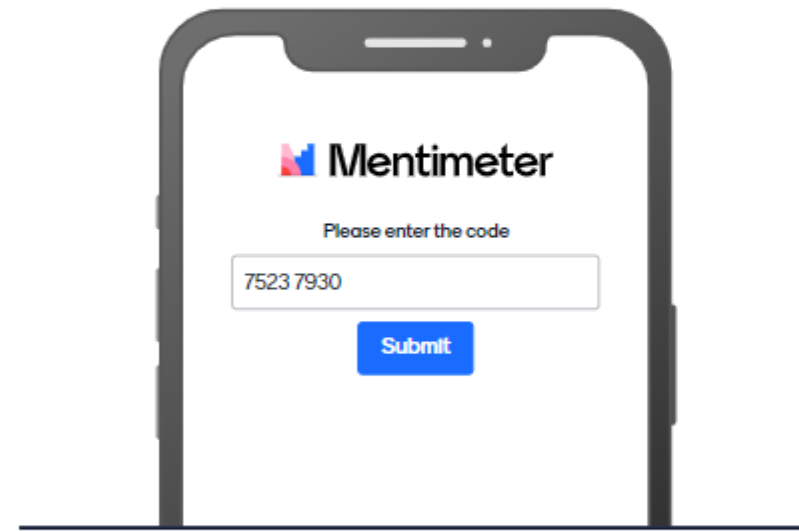
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Or use QR code

Menti Question:

What opportunities are there to create systemic change?

Q2: What opportunities are there to create systemic change?

Mentimeter

Click here to view answers

Press ENTER to stop scrolling

White Dominant Culture

Image created by Caroline J. Sumlin based on work by Tema Okun

QUESTIONS

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Thank You Project Advisory Group Members!

Laurie Angus

Josh Chan

Aditi Gupta

Emily Guerrero

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Courtney Miller

Sarah Tarcea

Abi Ward

Rina Hadziev, Executive Director

Todd Mundle, President

Tracey Therrien, Incoming-President