B’NAI SHALOM V’TIKVAH PROPOSED ANTI-RACISM, EQUITY & DIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENT AUGUST 17, 2021

By: Tyler Samuels

The purpose of this policy statement is to raise awareness of and compliance with B’Nai Shalom v’Tikvah’s commitment to providing a culturally inclusive Jewish community free from racial discrimination.

B’Nai Shalom v’Tikvah (BSVT) is an inclusive, egalitarian Reform Jewish congregation committed to celebrating and fostering connections to the Jewish traditions of tikkun olam (repair the world) and tikkun h’nefesh (repair the soul) and perpetuating Jewish culture through observance, Talmud Torah (study of Torah) and community action. To that end, BSVT inspires diverse participants to explore together how Judaism can meaningfully enrich our lives.

As a Jewish faith community, we hold to the principle that we are all made in the image of G\_d and in turn we find prejudice and bigotry to be offensive. BSVT strives to be a truly anti-racist, inclusive and equitable Jewish community, protecting the human rights of all persons, and, based upon understanding and mutual respect, for the dignity and worth of every person. BSVT recognizes and values differences in race, ethnic origin, gender identity, gender expression, ancestry, place of origin, colour, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, political affiliation, ability, and Indigenous identity.

BSVT also acknowledges that members from these communities are not treated equally and often encounter barriers which hinder equal access to employment, education, information, activities, programs and services. In light of continuing racism against Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) throughout Canada, BSVT is committed to building an inclusive and diverse community that actively welcomes Jews and non-Jews of every racial and ethnic background and that promotes everyone’s equality, dignity and welfare.

BSVT recognizes that racism is systemic in Canadian society and extends beyond racially motivated acts of violence or segregation of ethno racial groups. Racism continues to be embedded in the dominant culture and social institutions in a way that is so pervasive that it is often overlooked. Racism affects an individual’s perception of the world either knowingly or unknowingly and is based upon preconceived attitudes or stereotypes which make them prejudge people and situations. BSVT acknowledges that we are all responsible to ensure discrimination is eliminated and that barriers that have prevented the full membership, participation and leadership of BIPOC are eliminated. At the core of our Jewish identity is to NOT sit idly by when we see injustice but rather to listen, speak out and act.

BSVT is committed to anti-racist educational initiatives, curriculums and frameworks and includes, but not limited to:

* Recognition and appreciation for the inherent multiracial identity of the Jewish community.
* Discovering and examining the Jewish history of BIPOC communities.
* Employing an anti-racist framework and lens in synagogue decision making.
* Recognition there are many cultures that contribute to our cultural Judaism that will be explored in our synagogue programming and its inherent diversification of ideas and perspectives that enriches our teachings and other activities.

BSVT further concedes the need for an on-going process to address racism that can be summarized from the following quote obtained from the open letter dated June 30, 2020 penned by the movement, **No Silence on Race**, “Creating anti-racist, inclusive and equitable Jewish spaces will require deep self-reflection, difficult conversations and an ongoing commitment to reimagining what the Jewish community can look like. Above all, it must be guided by the celebration of Jewish culture and a love for one another.”