

Inclusive Language Guide



**Prepared for
District Staff, Elected Officials,
Volunteers and third-parties working
alongside the District**

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Acknowledgments

This Inclusive Language Guide was developed after a review of inclusive language guides across Canada. Resources that were used to develop this guide include:

- British Columbia's Public Service Agency's *Words Matter*
- City of Edmonton's *Inclusive Language Guide*
- City of Oshawa's *Inclusive Language Manual*
- City of Vancouver's *Indigenous Style Guide*
- York Region's *Inclusive Language Guide*

Thank you to the members of the Staff IDEA Advisory Group (SIAG) for their role in the development of this guide and their commitment to advocating for change that will help build an inclusive workplace.



Introduction

Purpose

The District of Muskoka (District) is committed to being an inclusive workplace that is free from discrimination, hate and racism, that welcomes and celebrates diversity, and that strives for equity in all practices, programs, and services – both as an employer and service provider. This Inclusive Language Guide was developed to help support this vision and help staff feel confident when working with diverse clients, customers, colleagues, and community members.

Inclusive language is language that is free from words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped, or discriminatory views of particular people or groups. It is also language that does not deliberately or inadvertently exclude people from feeling respected and accepted.

Using inclusive language helps us honour the District's corporate values of Respect, Innovation, Service, and Equity (RISE). It also honours the values that reflect Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-racism/Anti-hate (IDEA) which are respect, learning, change and safety.

This guide provides guiding principles and suggestions to support the use of inclusive language as well as background about why certain words or phrases have evolved. This guide is not a policy or procedure, or an exhaustive list of all words or phrases. Language is constantly evolving and what may have been acceptable a few years ago might not be acceptable now, and what is considered best practice now might not be in the future. This guide is a living document and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect language as it changes over time.

We encourage staff to use their best judgement when applying the principles in this guide and to build from these guidelines by learning more about inclusive language and the history or origins of the words and phrases.

Inclusive Language and the Ontario Human Rights Code

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* (the Code) provides protection from discrimination in five social areas of our lives: contracts, employment, goods, services and facilities, housing, membership in vocational associations and trade unions. In these five social areas, the Code prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on the following protected grounds: age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance, record of offences (in employment only), sex and sexual orientation.

This guide provides general principles for how inclusive language can be used to avoid discrimination in relation to the various protected grounds covered by the Code.

The Guide and the SIAG / IAG

This Inclusive Language Guide is one of the initiatives resulting from the SIAG's Strategic Action Plan. The SIAG provides advice and makes recommendations to the District's Strategic Leadership Team as related to the implementation of IDEA principles, approaches, best practices, and policies. Other goals of the SIAG include promoting IDEA principles and practices throughout the organization and creating opportunities for staff engagement and education to advance the understanding of IDEA principles and best practices.

In addition to the SIAG, there is an IDEA Advisory Group (IAG) that provides advice and makes recommendations to the District Council to support it in its goal to make Muskoka a more inclusive, equitable and anti-racist community.

Learn more about the IAG and their Strategic Action Plan by reviewing the Muskoka IDEA Project page online at www.engagemuskoka.ca/idea

District Diversity and Equity

In late 2020 and early 2021, research activities were undertaken by the District to learn more about the demographic profile of Muskoka using the lens of IDEA. Community engagement through a survey and series of focus groups and interviews with community members and local agencies were also conducted.

Key things heard through these engagement activities were:

- Discrimination is a reality in Muskoka, as it is across the country.
- Building inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism is hard to do, but it is important and timely work for the District.
- It will take the combined efforts of the government, organizations, business, and community members alike.
- Tackling this work successfully requires responsiveness and flexibility, and ultimately actions that embed the commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism in all we do.

To learn more about the demographic profile of the District and detailed engagement findings, read the Muskoka IDEA Project: Interim Report on Findings from the Community of Muskoka available online at www.engagemuskoka.ca/idea

Before we Begin

When reading through this guide, keep in mind that a group or individual might have a different preference about how they wish to be addressed or referred to. If you are not sure about what kind of words to use when referencing people, this guide can help. Alternatively, if you feel comfortable, you can also consider asking the person or group how they like to be addressed, referred to and included. However, it is important to remember that no one is perfect, and we all make mistakes.

If you DO make a mistake, and someone lets you know, try the following:

1. Apologize sincerely, do not make excuses.
2. Understand your mistake and how to avoid it in the future.
3. Do your best not to make the same mistake again.
4. Do not over-apologize and put pressure on the person you are speaking with to feel like they have to mitigate YOUR discomfort.

To have an inclusive workplace we all need to move forward together. By encouraging and respecting open communication, we can create meaningful change.

There are many resources available to help with understanding inclusion and the use of inclusive language. To get started you could watch the following videos:

- The importance of inclusive language
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQMCQ7Bx6d0>
- Why are microaggressions like mosquitoes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emz49wSnNcs>
- Inclusion starts with "I"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2g88Ju6nkcg>

Business Words or Phrases

Many common words or phrases we use at work every day have offensive and harmful origins and we often don't know the history of them. Avoid using references to a particular group, a historic practice that affected a group, idioms, jargon, and metaphors that may reinforce stereotypes, generalizations, and biases.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Before using a phrase, ask yourself, "Do I know what this means or where the saying comes from?"
- Would a person whose first language is not English, or who is from outside Canada understand?
- Avoid terms that use the words black or white as black is often associated with being negative and white as being positive. For example, blackmail, black sheep, blacklist, whitelist.
- Avoid describing your work as slavery, or using terminology that compares you to a racialized group.

Avoid

Embrace

Blackout	Period of closure, shutdown
Blacklist / Whitelist	Block, deny / allow, safelist
Comments from the peanut gallery	Comments from people who aren't involved
Grandfathered in/ Grandfathering	Exempted, excused
Going postal	Becoming extremely angry
Having a powwow	Having a meeting to discuss
Let's circle the wagons	Let's bring the team together
Master, own, owner	Primary, main, lead, leader
Slaving away, work slave, fellow slaves, slave driver	Working away, fellow co-workers
Sold down the river	Betrayed, mislead

Additional details on the meaning of these phrases and why to avoid them can be found in [Appendix A – Examples of Phrases to Avoid](#).

Inclusive Writing

When writing your business communications and emails, try to use language that is positive and gender inclusive to all. The goal is to use non-discriminatory language and to avoid gender-biased expressions or stereotypes so your audience feels appreciated.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Use gender neutral terms (i.e.) person (versus “man” or “woman”).
- Use gender inclusive language when the gender is unknown.
- Use gender inclusive language when addressing a diverse group.

Avoid

Embrace

Mr., Mrs., Ms.

Dear Mr. Jones,

Dear Mrs. Jones,

First Name Last Name; or

First Initial Last Name

Dear Alex Jones;; or

Dear A. Jones,

Sir or Madam

Dear Sir,

Dear Madam,

First Name Last Name; or

First Initial Last Name

Dear Alex Jones;; or

Dear A. Jones,

Councilman or Councilwoman

Dear Councilman Wang,

Dear Councilwoman Wang,

Councillor

Dear Councillor Wang,

Husband or Wife

Spouse, partner

Pronouns, if unknown

Using the person's first name

Salesman or Saleswoman

Salesperson

Age

Ageism is discrimination against individuals or groups based on their age. Age discrimination is often not taken as seriously as other forms of discrimination; however, it can have the same impact as any other form of discrimination.

Ageism affects everyone, everywhere. The World Health Organization (WHO) has a global campaign to combat ageism and has a powerful video on how “age doesn’t define you”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vIrL7fiNgw>

It is important to be respectful when discussing or referring to age, keeping in mind that, for most situations, it is unnecessary to refer to someone’s age. Inappropriate language can target people of any age and it is best to discuss age, if it is necessary, without any bias or stereotypes.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Do not ask about a person’s age.
- Do not make comments about people’s age or appearance, even if it is meant to be a compliment.
- Do not make assumptions about the capabilities of people based on their age.
- Avoid lumping entire generations of people together.

Avoid

Old man/woman, oldies,
old-timer, grey-hairs,
elderly, aged

Junior, kid, kiddo, punk,
whippersnapper,
wet behind the ears

Young and vibrant team /
mature workforce

"How old are you?"

Past their prime, older worker,
retirement age, set in their ways

Generational labels
(Zoomers, Millennials,
Baby Boomers, etc.)

Embrace

Older adult, older person

Young adult, young person

Effective and vibrant team
/ experienced and skilled
workforce

"I'm impressed by your
knowledge/experience"

Experienced

People born between....

You can also visit the WHO website for more information
and resources on combatting ageism, including a Quick
Guide to Avoiding Ageism in Communication.

<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/quick-guide-to-avoid-ageism-in-communication>

Creed or Religion

The right to be treated equally based on creed/religious beliefs and practices and to freely hold and practice creed beliefs of one's choosing, are fundamental human rights in Ontario. The Code does not define creed, but the courts and tribunals have often referred to religious beliefs and practices. Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview, and way of life.

Respecting a person's beliefs also means using language that is inclusive and appropriate.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Only ask about a person's religious practices if you are confident in their religious affiliation.
- Avoid using language with a group that assumes a common religious practice, belief, or observance.
- Do not force an individual to accept or comply with a religious practice or belief.
- Consider rephrasing common terms that reference religious practices or figures.
- Do not make assumptions about how another individual may or may not practice their beliefs.

Avoid

Christmas holidays

"Oh my god", "Oh lord",
"Sweet Jesus"

Holy followers, church go-ers

Heathen, pagan, non-believer

"What is your Christian name?"

Embrace

Work/winter break,
vacation, holidays

"My goodness",
"Oh my gosh"

Follower of the _____ faith

Persons without a
religious affiliation

"What is your first name?"

Disability

The term “disability” covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A disability may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, age or illness or developed over time. Not all disabilities are permanent, and some may only occur periodically (e.g. seasonal).

There are physical, mental, and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, mental health disabilities and addictions, environmental sensitivities, and other conditions.

When speaking to or about a person with a disability, it is important to focus on the person and not on their disability and to use person-first language. This type of language prioritizes the person first and references the disability second, emphasizing that they are not defined by their disability. In most situations there will be no need to refer to a person’s disability. If the need does arise, an effective way to determine a person’s preferences for what language to use is to ask the individual.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Never assume a person’s disability, ability or health status based on their appearance.
- Use language inclusive of the range of disabilities that exist.
- Generally, frame a disability and most medical conditions as something a person has rather than what they are.
- Be cautious about using words that suggest weakness, such as impairment or “suffer from”.
- Do not use words that contribute to the stigma of mental health.

Avoid

Confined to a wheelchair,
wheelchair bound

Disabled person, physically
challenged or crippled, blind
person, deaf person

Handicapped washroom / parking

My workload is crazy / insane /
bonkers / crippling

That's so lame / dumb

Scott suffers from epilepsy

Slow, dumb, stupid, retarded

That was tone deaf

We were blind to the
consequences / blind spot

Embrace

Uses a wheelchair

Person with a disability,
person with a physical
disability, person with a vision
disability

Accessible washroom /
parking

My workload is very heavy

That's so boring /
uninteresting

Scott is living with epilepsy

Person with a cognitive /
developmental / intellectual
disability

That was obviously not
aligned with ...

We didn't anticipate the
consequences / gap

Immigration, Country of Origin and Citizenship

Canada is one of the most diverse countries in the world and our country's values of inclusion and respect for all cultures make it an ideal place for immigrants. Immigrants, with or without Canadian citizenship, are important community members and are vital to Canada's economic development and growth.

The Code protects individuals from discrimination based on their citizenship status, meaning that immigrants who do not have Canadian citizenship cannot be denied service or be discriminated against because of their status.

It is important to be cautious, and only refer to a person's immigration status or country of origin or citizenship if it is relevant or necessary to providing services or it is raised as a topic by the individual.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Only discuss a person's experience as an immigrant if they shared this information with you and are comfortable discussing it.
- Do not make jokes or comments about the length of time someone has been living in Canada.
- Do not make derogatory comments about a person's country of origin.
- Do not use language that suggests that immigrants or people without Canadian citizenship are not qualified to work.

Avoid

Non-Canadian, illegal, green carder, alien, foreigner, stranger, fresh off the boat, non-citizen, intruder, invader, refugee, undocumented

Legalized, real citizen, real Canadian

Are you here legally?

Are you allowed to have a job?

Embrace

Person who is an immigrant, person without a Canadian citizenship

Canadian citizen, person with a Canadian citizenship, permanent resident

Your previous experience outside Canada is really helping this project.

How are you enjoying your job?

Indigenous Peoples

As a commitment to reconciliation, using language that more accurately reflects Indigenous people is important. Indigenous Peoples are strong, diverse, and resilient, but the English language has many inherent biases that tend to diminish, homogenize, and misrepresent them.

Indigenous Peoples is the broadest term of identity. It refers not only to people in North America, but all over the world who are the original inhabitants of a particular region. There are three distinct groups of Indigenous People in Canada: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Formerly, the Government of Canada referred to these groups collectively as Aboriginal. As more governments adopt the language of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous has been replacing Aboriginal in common use.

“Indigenous people” with a lower case “people” refers to more than one Indigenous person rather than the collective group of Indigenous Peoples. If a person is working with a specific group that identifies as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis they are encouraged to use the more specific name rather than the broader term.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Indigenous Peoples come from different nations with distinct languages, cultures and customs and should not be referred to as a homogenous group. The specific nation or community should be used when possible.
- Avoid vocabulary that is possessive and describes Indigenous Peoples as “belonging” to a general entity or to the country of Canada e.g. Our Indigenous Communities, Canada’s Indigenous Peoples.
- Capitalize formal titles and maintain consistency.
- Cultural objects and ceremonies have specific sacred meanings and uses unique to Indigenous Peoples and should only be used in that context.

Avoid

Canada's Indigenous people or
Our Indigenous Neighbours

Costume

Indian (unless stating from a
legal document), Native (unless
stating the title of an organization),
Aboriginal (some legislation uses
this term), Native Americans

Low man on the totem pole

Old Indian, old geezer, senior

Settlement, European arrival

Embrace

Indigenous People in Canada,
Wahta Mohawks First Nation,
Moose Deer Point First
Nation, Chippewas of Rama
First Nation

Regalia

Indigenous Peoples

Person with the least
seniority

Elder

Colonization, Colonizers,
Settlers

Family and Marital Status

“Family status” is “the status of being in a parent and child relationship.” This can also mean a parent and child “type” of relationship, embracing a range of circumstances without blood or adoptive ties but with similar relationships of care, responsibility, and commitment.

“Marital status” is “the status of being married, single, widowed, divorced or separated and includes the status of living with a person in a conjugal relationship outside marriage”, including relationships between people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Marital and family status can cover a range of family structures, including lone parent and blended families or families where parents are in a common law relationship. There are various family structures, and it is important to use language that is sensitive to the fact that a family may take many forms.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- If a person is in a relationship do not refer to their wife, husband, boyfriend, or girlfriend, unless those terms are known as preferred by the individual. If unknown, use spouse or partner.
- The question of marital or family status can be avoided by using names only. Titles like Mr., Mrs. and Ms. Should be avoided if possible.
- Do not ask if someone, or someone’s child was adopted, or how a person or a person’s child was conceived.
- Do not ask when someone will have a child or why they have chosen not to have children.
- Do not tell people who are childless they are lucky for not having children.

Avoid

Embrace

Childless family, childless couple

Person without a child/
children

Divorced family, stepfamily,
mixed family

Blended family

Expecting mother / father

Person expecting a child

Maternity Leave

Parental Leave

Mom and Dad

Parent or Guardian

Natural or real parent

Birth parent

Parents with children

Adults / caregivers with
children

Son, daughter

Children or child

Race and Ethnic Background

Race is the idea that people can be divided into different groups based on physical characteristics that they are perceived to share such as skin colour, eye shape, or hair texture. Race is a social construct based on physical differences which society chooses to emphasize, it is not biological.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has adopted the use of the term “racialized person” and “racialized group” in recognition of the fact that race is a social construct. These current terms should be considered in place of the terms “racial minority”, “visible minority” or “person of colour”.

Not all countries have the same ideas of race. For example, someone who is considered Black in one country might be considered White in another. It is important to respect a group or individual’s preference about how they wish to be addressed and referred to. It is best to check with an individual to determine how they would like to be addressed, to avoid generalizations and stereotypes.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples, and cultures.
- Avoid references to race or ethnic backgrounds if they are not necessary.
- Do not assume a person’s race, culture or ethnic background based on appearance.
- Do not assume that people who share similar physical characteristics have similar racial, cultural, or ethnic identities.
- Avoid racial and ethnic stereotypes and generalizations. The following video titled “Where are you From” is a fun and helpful way to understand why we should avoid stereotypes.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crAv5ttax2I>

Avoid

Embrace

Caucasian

White

Coloured, person of colour,
non-whites

Black, Indigenous, and other
people of colour (BIPOC),
racialized

The/those [specific nationality]
Example: The Asians, East Asians,
Middle Easterns, Latin Americans,
etc.

A person of [specific
nationality] heritage/
background/descent

Mixed race, half, half-breed,
mulatto

Biracial, multiracial

Minority

Member of a minority ethnic
group

Third world

Developing countries/nations

Sex, Gender, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

The terms sex, gender, gender identity and gender expression are complex and have different meanings. To practice inclusive language, it is helpful to start with the definitions of these terms:

- **Sex:** the classification of people as male, female, or intersex, usually assigned at birth based on physical characteristics.
- **Gender:** the expectations and stereotypes about behaviours, actions, and roles, linked to being a “man” or “woman” within a particular culture or society.
- **Gender Identity:** an individual’s understanding or personal sense of their own gender.
- **Gender Expression:** a person’s public expression or presentation of their gender.

A detailed list of terms to help facilitate gender inclusive language can be found by accessing The 519’s Glossary of Terms.

<https://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary/>.

Language can take on unnecessarily gendered forms. This includes words, phrases and expressions that differentiate between men and woman, or exclude or diminish either gender or sex. For example, “manpower” can be replaced with terms such as “workforce”, or “staff”.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Avoid assumptions about gender and use gender neutral language.
- Avoid terms that show gender bias in a profession (e.g.) fireman.
- Ask individuals what their preferred pronouns are. For more information about gender pronouns, explore the resources

found at the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity
<https://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/>

- Use terms of equal status and avoid terms that suggest gender inferiority.
- Respect name preferences and address a person by the name they are currently using.

Avoid

Embrace

Foreman, tradesman

Foreperson, tradesperson

Ladies and Gentlemen, Hey guys

Hello everyone, Hey Team

Man hours

Staff hours, work hours

Mankind

People, human beings

Man, woman

The person, individual (when gender identity is unknown)

Sportsmanlike

Sporting, team player

The girls, the ladies

Staff members, employees, refer to the department or division

Pronouns, if unknown

Use the person's name if pronouns are unknown

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is the emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction that a person feels towards another person. Sexual orientation is a personal characteristic that forms a part of who you are. It is not the same as a gender identity or gender expression, as defined in the previous section.

Sexual orientation covers a range of human sexuality from heterosexual to Two-spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Plus (other identities) (2SLGBTQI+). It is also a spectrum and people can be attracted to a range of characteristics.

The acronym 2SLGBTQI+ represents many but not all groups and may have different forms such as LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQ+, LGBTQ2S+ as it continues to evolve. To learn the meaning of the different types of sexual orientation, visit The 519's Glossary of Terms. <https://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary/>.

It is important to be mindful and respectful of the range of sexual orientations that exist; terms or phrases that refer negatively to any orientation are not acceptable in inclusive language.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Be cautious about making assumptions.
- Respect a person's privacy, not everyone is comfortable sharing their orientation.
- Do not use terms and phrases that associate being gay or lesbian negatively.
- Speak up if you hear a homophobic joke, or something that is offensive and demeaning.
- Do not call relationships between same-sex couples "same-sex" relationships unless it is necessary to clarify.

Avoid

Gay agenda, lesbian agenda, homosexual agenda

Gay marriage

Homosexual, queer (as an insult)

Homosexual couple/relationship

Lifestyle choice / sexual preference

Normal, straight

Person who swings both ways

That's so gay, you're gay

Embrace

Issues relating to persons who are gay / lesbians

Marriage

Lesbian, gay, LGBTQ2S+

Relationship, gay couple, lesbian couple

Sexual orientation

Heterosexual

Bisexual, pansexual

Avoid negativity linked to the LGBTQ2S+ community

Social Assistance and Low Income

Income levels in Muskoka are generally lower than the average for Ontario as a whole. People who experience low-income status have typically been judged or blamed for their situation and can face negative attitudes. These attitudes can lead to stigma, shame, and a sense of exclusion.

Persons experiencing low-income are likely to have engaged with the social services system. Do not provide advice on how to lift themselves out of their current situation unless it is part of your job. Providing income, housing or other related advice may be taken as patronizing, especially if you are not informed about their unique situation.

Anyone may experience low-income at some point in their lives, and it is important to remember that it is not permanent. How we treat fellow community members can contribute to their sense of belonging, and using inclusive language is a way to make everyone feel included.

Tips to be more inclusive:

- Do not phrase low-income status as a choice or something someone is responsible for.
- Use person first language when referring to people experiencing low-income status, homelessness or conflict with the law as this emphasizes they are people first and their status or situation comes second.
- Do not use negative stereotypes about people experiencing low-income status.

Avoid

Criminal, gangster, squeegee kid, hoodlum, thug

Homeless person, shelter hopper, the homeless, street person, beggar, bum, bag lady, hobo

Poor person, poverty stricken, couch surfer, person in poverty
Note: due to the stigma associated with the word “poverty”, it is recommended to avoid this word unless referring to legislation or policy that uses this terminology.

The hungry, the hungry poor

Welfare seeker/user, food stamper, trailer trash, white trash

Have you tried looking for low-income housing?

He is still on Ontario Works; he is so lazy

Embrace

Person in conflict with the law

Person experiencing homelessness, person in a shelter, a person who is homeless, a person who is underhoused

Person experiencing low-income, person living with low-income, person with low-income status.

Person experiencing food insecurity

Person accessing social assistance or Ontario Works, person with a disability accessing Ontario Disability Support Program

Have you talked to a social services professional?

He has had to remain on Ontario Works

Appendix A –

Examples of Phrases to Avoid

The following are examples of phrases or metaphors to avoid, their meaning, and why to avoid them. This is not an exhaustive list. Google a phrase to learn more.

Metaphor or Phrase	Meaning	Avoid Because
Blackout / Blackout Period	Blackout in the technological world means inaccessible or restricted.	Use of the word “black” for something associated with being undesirable or negative is offensive to racialized groups as it perpetuates the stigma that black is “bad”.
Blacklist or Whitelist	A blackout period is a temporary interval during which access to certain actions is limited or denied. A blacklist refers to a list of people or things considered unacceptable or untrustworthy, or that should be excluded or avoided. A whitelist refers to a list of people or things considered acceptable or trustworthy.	The association between “white” and “black” with “acceptable” and “unacceptable” is offensive to racialized groups as it perpetuates the stigma that black is “bad”.

Metaphor or Phrase	Meaning	Avoid Because
Chinese Whispers	A situation in which a piece of information is passed from one person to the next and is changed slightly each time it's told.	This term stems from a racist idea that Chinese people spoke in a way that was deliberately unintelligible. It associates the Chinese language with “confusion” and “incomprehensibility”.
Comments from the peanut gallery	A group of people who give unwanted comments, criticisms, or advice, often by only focusing on insignificant details.	According to linguistics experts, the origin of this phrase derives from the late 1800s Vaudeville era, a popular style of entertainment that included jugglers, comedians, singers and more. The “peanut gallery” was the cheapest section of seats, usually occupied by people with limited means or in the segregated South, mostly for Black people. This term is offensive to racialized groups due to its origins.
Grandfathered in	A provision within a new law or regulation that exempts certain people or entities from following that law. Those with “grandfathered in” status may continue to behave as before,	The first grandfather clauses were designed to deny black people the right to vote. This came after at the 15th Amendment prohibited racial discrimination in voting. In response, a number of southern states passed complex laws to stop black

Metaphor or Phrase	Meaning	Avoid Because
	while everyone else must follow the new rules.	Americans from voting. But since these would also affect some white citizens, states exempted people whose grandfathers had the right to vote, thereby protecting poor white Americans while excluding freed slaves. This term is offensive to racialized groups due to its origins.
Going postal	This refers to a person becoming extremely or uncontrollably angry in a workplace environment, often resulting in violence or aggression towards other people.	Using this phrase is not advised as it makes light of injury and death. It has also been used negatively in connection with potential mental health illnesses.
Having a powwow	To have a quick meeting to discuss something.	Use of the word “powwow” is considered to be an offensive appropriation of a term of great cultural importance to Indigenous Peoples.
Let’s circle the wagons	A group of people who unite for a common person.	The phrase “circle the wagons” is the name of a defensive technique used by early settlers for protection against possible attack by Indigenous Peoples.

Metaphor or Phrase	Meaning	Avoid Because
		This term has racist origins and portrays Indigenous Peoples negatively.
Master	Having authority over someone or something.	Master is another word for slave owner. This term is offensive to racialized groups due to its origin.
Sold down the river	Used to signify an act of betrayal or compromised trust.	This originates from the early 19th century slave trade in the United States. The “river” is a reference to the Mississippi or Ohio rivers and “to be sold down the river” refers to when Black slaves from more northern regions would be sold in Louisville, Kentucky, and transported to the cotton plantations in states further south. This term is offensive to racialized groups due to its origin.



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