

WHAT DRIVES THE PAY AND INCOME GAP?

BC and Canada's colonial systems are built on economic injustice. The pay and income gap—across gender, race, status, and ability—is a symptom of that injustice.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

West Coast LEAF facilitated a multi-year community engagement process to deepen our understanding of economic injustice, the impacts of the pay gap, and the needed solutions.

Through this work, we identified the Indigenous Equity Framework of Relational Environments (IEFRE) framework, developed by Indigenous scholars Dr. Charlotte Loppie and Dr. Jeannine Carriere, as a helpful tool to explore the complexity of economic justice and well-being.

WHY A TREE?

The IEFRE uses the metaphor of a tree to describe three environments that shape inequities. Many racialized people in our engagements found that the tree metaphor resonated with their experiences navigating economic exploitation and the gender pay gap.

Through the IEFRE, we are better able to trace the drivers and impacts of the pay and income gaps facing communities today.

LEAVES: STEM ENVIRONMENT

The impacts on people's day-to-day lives - wages, housing, food security, health, and well-being.

How does the pay gap affect daily life?

How does the pay and income gap show up in our communities?

Where do we see the impacts most clearly?

TRUNK: CORE ENVIRONMENT

Laws, policies, and systems that uphold inequities, from weak employment standards to immigration policies.

How do institutions reinforce the gap?

Which policies make the pay gap worse?

ROOTS: FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENT

Systemic drivers of inequity shaped by historical foundations and current ideologies including, colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and ableism.

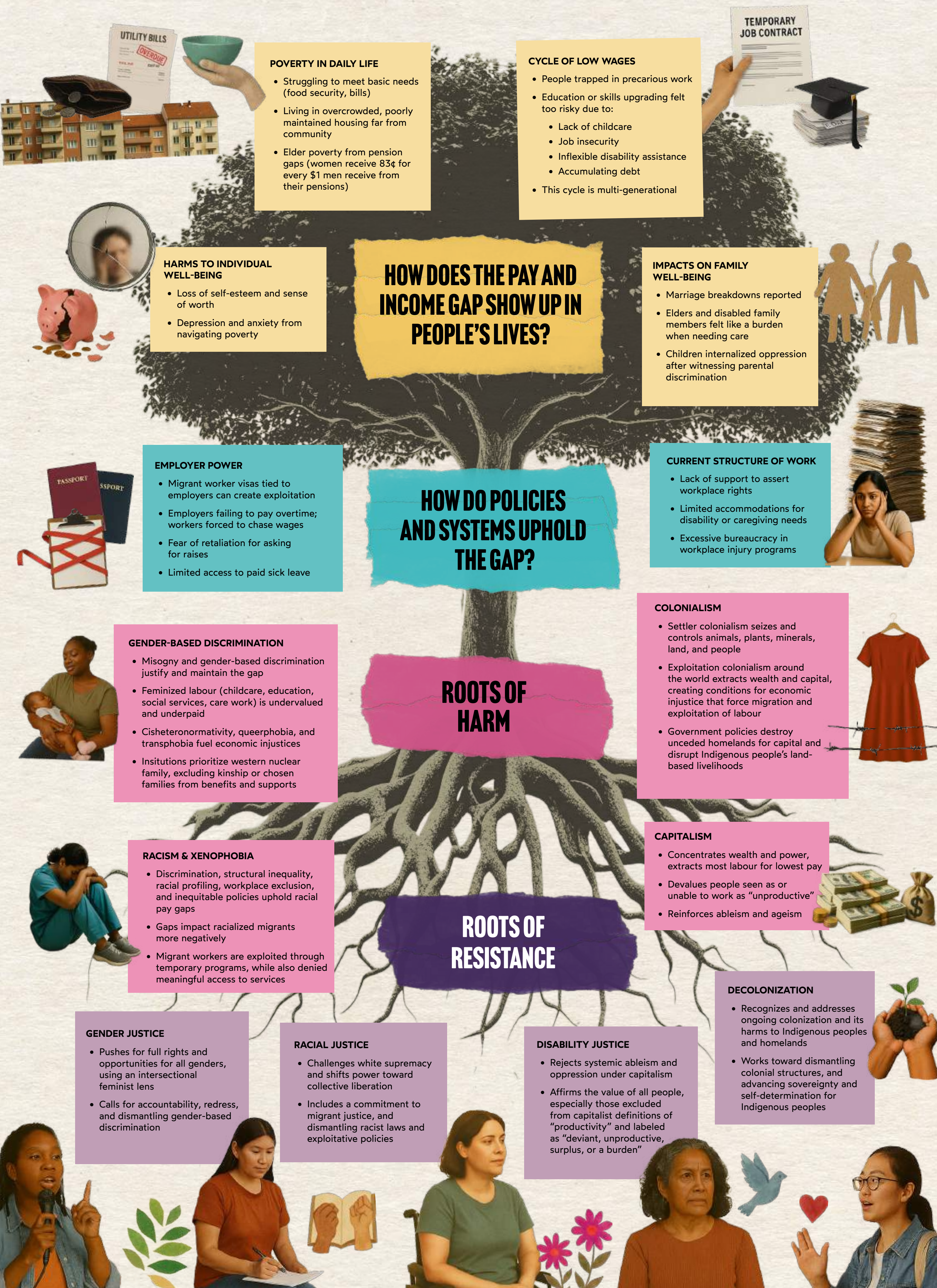
Where does the pay gap come from?

What are the roots of inequality?

Which forces drive economic injustice?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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POVERTY IN DAILY LIFE

- Struggling to meet basic needs (food security, bills)
- Living in overcrowded, poorly maintained housing far from community
- Elder poverty from pension gaps (women receive 83¢ for every \$1 men receive from their pensions)

CYCLE OF LOW WAGES

- People trapped in precarious work
- Education or skills upgrading felt too risky due to:
 - Lack of childcare
 - Job insecurity
 - Inflexible disability assistance
 - Accumulating debt
- This cycle is multi-generational



HARMS TO INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING

- Loss of self-esteem and sense of worth
- Depression and anxiety from navigating poverty

HOW DOES THE PAY AND INCOME GAP SHOW UP IN PEOPLE'S LIVES?

IMPACTS ON FAMILY WELL-BEING

- Marriage breakdowns reported
- Elders and disabled family members felt like a burden when needing care
- Children internalized oppression after witnessing parental discrimination



EMPLOYER POWER

- Migrant worker visas tied to employers can create exploitation
- Employers failing to pay overtime; workers forced to chase wages
- Fear of retaliation for asking for raises
- Limited access to paid sick leave

HOW DO POLICIES AND SYSTEMS UPHOLD THE GAP?

CURRENT STRUCTURE OF WORK

- Lack of support to assert workplace rights
- Limited accommodations for disability or caregiving needs
- Excessive bureaucracy in workplace injury programs



GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION

- Misogyny and gender-based discrimination justify and maintain the gap
- Feminized labour (childcare, education, social services, care work) is undervalued and underpaid
- Cisheteronormativity, queerphobia, and transphobia fuel economic injustices
- Institutions prioritize western nuclear family, excluding kinship or chosen families from benefits and supports

ROOTS OF HARM

COLONIALISM

- Settler colonialism seizes and controls animals, plants, minerals, land, and people
- Exploitation colonialism around the world extracts wealth and capital, creating conditions for economic injustice that force migration and exploitation of labour
- Government policies destroy unceded homelands for capital and disrupt Indigenous people's land-based livelihoods



RACISM & XENOPHOBIA

- Discrimination, structural inequality, racial profiling, workplace exclusion, and inequitable policies uphold racial pay gaps
- Gaps impact racialized migrants more negatively
- Migrant workers are exploited through temporary programs, while also denied meaningful access to services

ROOTS OF RESISTANCE

CAPITALISM

- Concentrates wealth and power, extracts most labour for lowest pay
- Devalues people seen as or unable to work as "unproductive"
- Reinforces ableism and ageism



DECOLONIZATION

- Recognizes and addresses ongoing colonization and its harms to Indigenous peoples and homelands
- Works toward dismantling colonial structures, and advancing sovereignty and self-determination for Indigenous peoples



GENDER JUSTICE

- Pushes for full rights and opportunities for all genders, using an intersectional feminist lens
- Calls for accountability, redress, and dismantling gender-based discrimination

RACIAL JUSTICE

- Challenges white supremacy and shifts power toward collective liberation
- Includes a commitment to migrant justice, and dismantling racist laws and exploitative policies

DISABILITY JUSTICE

- Rejects systemic ableism and oppression under capitalism
- Affirms the value of all people, especially those excluded from capitalist definitions of "productivity" and labeled as "deviant, unproductive, surplus, or a burden"

