



# Board Bits

## The Blind Spots We All Share: Bias and Better Board Decisions

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# Your Facilitator

## Desiree Tirk Trainer/Resource Developer - Leadership

- 25 years working in community development in the nonprofit and government sectors.
- Experience in facilitation and training, program development, board governance, and research.
- Bachelor of Indian Social Work, Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies, and various Governance certifications.
- Started with SARC in 2020.





## Who is SARC?

SARC is a nonprofit association that has over five decades of experience in supporting nonprofits in the areas of training, consulting, services, and leadership. With a membership of approximately 100 community-based organizations, we are committed to providing quality services and training opportunities to our membership and beyond.



## What is SARC Learning Central?

SARC Learning Central is the hub for SARC's training and education initiatives. Programs offered through SARC Learning Central focus on strengthening an organization and the quality of services they provide.



**SARC Learning Central**





# Treaty Acknowledgement

SARC and SARCAN Recycling would like to acknowledge that the land on which we operate our business is on Treaty 2, Treaty 4, Treaty 6, and Treaty 10 Territory.



# What is Bias?



*“Various research studies show that we all have unconscious biases that have become engrained through instinct, or which we have learned through society, our culture, our upbringing, and which are influenced by our personal filters.”*

- Charity Village



# Do You Bring Any Biases to The Boardroom?

- Effective board governance requires directors to challenge their personal biases.
- We all have biases.
- Most people are not aware of their own biases.
- Many people believe they are less biased than others creating a bias blind spot.



# Do You Bring Any Biases To The Boardroom?



*“Volunteers Boards tend to rely on individual directors to recognize and control their own biases, but few of us are sufficiently self-aware and candid about our own inherent biases to be able to do this.”*

- Adrienne Trainor and Byron Loflin,  
Center for Board Excellence



# Do You Bring Any Biases to The Boardroom?



*“We have a bias when, rather than being neutral, we have a preference for (or aversion to) a person or group of people. Thus, we use the term “implicit bias” to describe when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge.”*

- Perception Institute



# Why Bias Matters

Unconscious bias can unintentionally affect:

1. How we engage in conversation.
2. The questions we ask.
3. How innovative we are.
4. How people view leadership and the participation of other board directors.



*“Excellent governance requires skill, insight and informed and objective decision making.”*

- Harvard Business Review



# Common Biases Affecting Boards

1. Confirmation bias.
2. Group think.



*“Boards afflicted by Groupthink may fail to adequately challenge failing strategies, overlook emerging threats, or miss out on opportunities for innovation and growth.”*

- BoardPro



# Common Biases Affecting Boards

1. Confirmation bias.
2. Group think.
3. Anchoring bias.
4. Recency bias.



*“This can lead to ‘short -termism,’ where strategic planning focuses on immediate gains rather than sustainable growth.”*

- Nonprofit Pro



# Strategies to Reduce Bias



## Strengthen board processes

- Having policies, procedure, and processes in place.
- Declaring any potential conflicts of interest.
- Review assumptions explicitly.



# Strategies to Reduce Bias



Strengthen board processes



Encourage constructive challenge

- Ask questions and probe ideas and assumptions purposefully and respectfully.
- Encourage board directors to challenge themselves.
- Assign a rotating 'devil's advocate'.
- Invite diverse perspectives.
- Use data carefully.



# Strategies to Reduce Bias



Strengthen board processes.



Encourage constructive challenge.



Conduct decision reviews.

- Examine both decisions and outcomes.
- What worked, what didn't and what can the board learn for next time?



# Strategies to Reduce Bias



Strengthen board processes.



Encourage constructive challenge.



Conduct decision reviews.



Foster psychological safety.

- Make dissent acceptable and expected.



# Self Reflection

What biases or conflicts of interest have you become aware of that you might bring into the boardroom?

What can you do to challenge your biases or be certain that decisions you are making have not been influenced by personal interests?



# Wrap Up



Any questions?

# Thank you for joining us

Please complete the evaluation linked in the chat

We will email you the resource document(s) after the session

[www.sarclearningcentral.ca](http://www.sarclearningcentral.ca)