



Nobody's born a Racist

THE STUDENTS COMMISSION GUIDE TO EQUITY

March 1995

Youth speaks, youth acts to end discrimination

“We, as youth of Canada, recognize that all individuals are equal and we are committed to working towards achieving similar opportunities for all.”

1994 Students Commission Report

“Through the Students Commission, we hope to eliminate the ignorance and misunderstandings which prevent us from achieving an environment of racial, cultural and environmental harmony.”

1993 Students Commission Report

“Education provides the key to stop ignorance – the root of racism and prejudice. Through education, equality is achieved. All Canadians must be sensitized through education, communication and personal interaction.”

1992 Students Commission Report

“We recognize that education is the key to unity. Ignorance is the cause of most of our problems. We have discovered here that when people begin to get to know each other, we can reach compromises.... We have to do more than listen, and it will take effort to change. We believe change begins with individual efforts.”

1991 Students Commission Report



The Students Commission was established in 1991. At each of our annual conferences, youth from across the country discuss our ideas and give voice to them in a National Youth Report, which 200 of us write at the conference. Then, in the following year and years, supported by our national network of fellow youth activists and friends, we put our ideas into action, making powerful, positive changes in Canadian society.

This print and video guide to equity and ending discrimination is produced by us, the youth of The Students Commission, in order to encourage other young people from across Canada to help us make a reality of our recommendations.

This guide and video are the result of the work of 800 Student Commissioners during the past four years. We have worked to begin to make our vision a reality across this land.

You can join our efforts. You too can be an agent of change.

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A team of Students Commission writers and videographers have created this anti-racism guide to equity and video to assist others to take action against discrimination.

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Our special thanks to Optimist Club members Gus Croteau, Paul Mills, Aileen Mills and Kim Phillips for their on-going fundraising efforts on behalf of the activities of The Students Commission and to all the other service clubs and business donors, who support the individual Student Commissioners who request funds for projects in their own communities.

Introduction:



In a world filled with hate and fear, we must eliminate racism and discrimination to achieve peace and equity for all.

RACISM is not just an issue facing a select segment of society. Racism affects everyone. We all have a stake in a racism-free society. The global village is here, and to be an effective citizen of the world, you must be able to understand, live and work with all of its citizens.

These actions must start today. The Canadian Constitution recognizes preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians. Equality and freedom from discrimination are the law. These issues need not face debate. The issue now, is how to ensure that every segment of society adheres to the law and fights racism. As Canadians, we are guaranteed the right to enjoy equal status, freedoms, power and privileges. It is also up to us to assume the right, the power and the responsibility to take action, provide leadership and set an example for the world.

This anti-racism Guide to Equity demonstrates how Canadian youth have taken the initiative to make a difference. We believe in being active participants in our lives by fighting racism and developing cross-cultural understanding. We have discovered that providing anti-racist education is an issue for all of us, especially for those who don't think racism is an issue in their community. If your education and point of view aren't consciously anti-racist, if you don't understand how others think, you will be disabled in tomorrow's world. Canadian youth know that racism isn't a problem for others to solve tomorrow, but for each and every person who wants to be an effective citizen to examine and fight today. It is our duty, too, as individuals and collective groups, to enhance and maintain a unified community. Changes won't occur until people are willing to stand up, get angry and refuse to tolerate the unjust treatment of fellow Canadians. Use this Guide as tool in your fight.

Take action and become an agent of change.

Knowledge → Power



Often what we think of as **normal** is only normal for us in our own situation or context. Our automatic way of looking at the world is “we/they.”

Normal is the way “we” do things. Who is we?

These definitions helped us write this guide to action against racism and discrimination of all kinds.

BIAS: a point of view, a way of looking that gives you a preference for or against a group of people, a situation, or an idea. Recognizing that we have biases lets us examine them, see how they dictate our actions, and helps us improve our relationships.

STEREOTYPE: grouping people based on inaccurate information and generalizations. This assumes that all the people in the group share the same characteristics. Stereotypes reduce the significance of the individual and don’t allow or recognize individual differences.

PREJUDICE: a prejudgement based on attitudes or opinions formed without accurate or sufficient evidence.

DISCRIMINATION: denies individuals or groups their rights and equality. This occurs when you act or behave based on your prejudiced feelings or when a system of power automatically excludes people.

RACISM: is a belief, attitude or behaviour that one group, because of race, ethnic background or colour, is superior to, or more important than others. Racism creates a “dominant” power group which intentionally or unintentionally excludes others. For example: studying only one dominant culture and history in school excludes most of the world, and is racist.

Attitude

preference for/against = **bias**

inaccurate information/generalization = **stereotyping**

bias/stereotyping + negative attitude = **prejudice**



Action

prejudice + action → **discrimination**

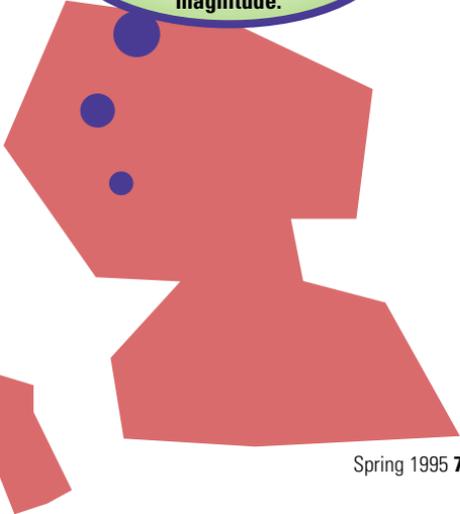
discrimination + power → **racism**

“We will be the agents of change.”

1994 Students Commission Report

- Name some other types of discrimination.
- Discuss what biases and stereotypes lead to discrimination.
- What privileges lead to power?

See more definitions in other chapters.



Every force in the universe will continue in motion until opposed by a force of equal magnitude.

How to start an action group

INCLUSION
ACTION

1. Get support from your principal.

2. Get support from a teacher(s).

3. Link up with your Board of Education and community groups.

Let them know what you're doing and that you would like their support.

4. Publicize yourselves to get students who are interested involved.

5. Determine a focus or objective.

What your group intends to do, how, and what age group it will focus on.

6. Research (educate yourself).

Learn about racism and definitions, attend workshops on racism, multiculturalism, conflict resolution or anti-racist education.

7. Establish contacts.

Meet people who are involved or who are experts in this area; talk to them about your ideas and see if they can help you out.

8. Don't give up.

Progress is slow. You won't change the world overnight, but you will make a difference.

9. Learn from your mistakes, build on successes.

This is true for almost anything. Remember to learn from the experience.

10. Diversity.

Once your group has established itself, try something different. A new age group, a different approach, a new way to educate.

11. Let your group grow.

It is sometimes difficult to teach the "new guy", but remember, the key to eliminating racism is to pass the message along.

How to start an action group was written by Nadia Keshavjee and published in *Winning Ideas to Stop Racism 1993*. If you want to submit an idea, action or effort of yours to *Winning Ideas*, contact us at 70 University Ave., Suite 1050, Toronto, ON, M5J 2M4 (416) 597-8297 and we'll tell you how.



PREJUDICE

EQUITY

ATTITUDE

CURRICULUM

RUNNERS

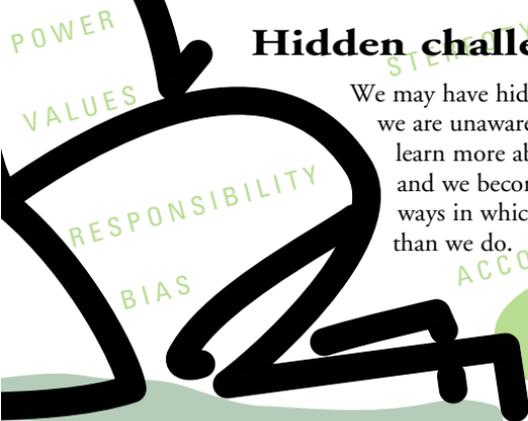
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D	I	E	N	R	R	I	C	M	O	V	M	R	T	J	E
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S	L	O	E	D	V	S	M	S	L	O	U	L	D	A	P
C	I	B	N	N	E	L	P	U	O	Q	R	A	I	E	O
R	S	M	Y	O	T	R	C	E	E	R	A	B	E	W	N
I	E	F	M	K	N	I	S	T	C	Y	C	L	O	Z	S
M	F	R	F	I	R	S	T	N	A	T	I	O	N	S	I
I	N	C	L	R	G	L	I	Y	L	N	S	V	U	H	B
N	O	P	U	B	J	R	U	M	T	S	M	B	L	E	I
A	C	C	O	U	N	T	A	B	I	L	I	T	Y	R	L
T	C	V	M	W	E	A	T	T	I	T	U	D	E	I	I
I	W	T	L	R	E	N	E	V	I	Y	C	B	W	T	T
O	U	J	I	E	P	R	E	B	M	O	E	I	K	A	Y
N	Y	M	R	O	V	A	L	U	E	S	N	L	M	G	N
K	E	R	B	I	N	C	L	U	S	I	O	N	R	E	W

IDENTITY

Hidden challenges

We may have hidden biases or prejudices of which we are unaware. When we become aware, we learn more about ourselves as well as others, and we become sensitive and respectful of the ways in which others see things differently than we do.

Find 20 hidden words related to the issues of racism and equity in this word puzzle.



POWER

VALUES

RESPONSIBILITY

BIAS

STEREOTYPE

HERITAGE

DISCRIMINATION

RESPECT

ACCOUNTABILITY

IMMIGRATION

ELDERS

RACISM

FIRST NATIONS

1

First Nations

“Native languages and culture must be respected and promoted. Natives must be recognized as one of Canada’s three founding peoples, and their languages, rights and cultures must be protected throughout Canada.”

1991 Students Commission Report

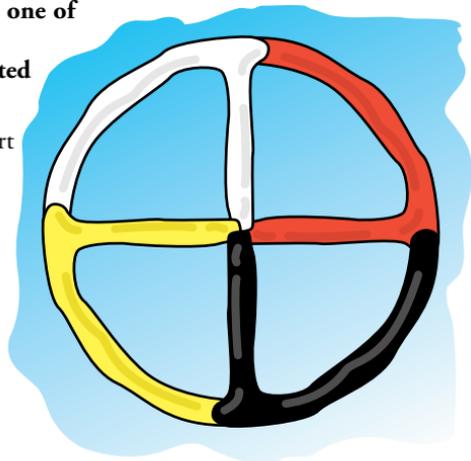
Native people believe that all living beings share a common bond with each other in the circle of life. The medicine wheel depicts the four colours of the race of man: red, black, white and yellow. As brothers and sisters of the Earth, we have a responsibility to one another to live in harmony.

The aboriginal cultures in North America are very diverse, each with their own unique identities. While they are all different from one another, they all share a special relationship with Mother Earth. The great circle of life connects all living beings from the beginning of time, where the four colours of people (black, red, yellow & white) are joined hand in hand as equals.

Video quote: “The circle is a very powerful thing. There’s a lot energy flowing in this circle. We all draw energy from the circle and help each other.”

DISCUSSION:

- What are the ingredients of a successful circle discussion?
- What environment needs to be created for a true sharing between individuals?



Personal Story: Internal Anger.



“He looked really sad and told me that I must hate him too.”

Colin is 21 yrs. old and is from the Mistawasis Reserve in Saskatchewan.

“I grew up hearing that Natives were lazy, they stole and they were dumb. I was the only native kid on the bus and the older kids who were white used to throw things at me and say things that really bothered me. I became hateful towards all whites.

I would fight and act out my anger towards people who were white. I grew up a bit and started to learn what being Indian meant. I was racist.

My mother, who is Native, divorced my dad and remarried my stepdad who is white. Eventually, she became pregnant and they had my little brother. I loved him a lot; I saw him as an Indian.

A couple of years ago, I went back home for a visit. I was coming back from a round dance. It was really early in the morning and I happened to wake up my little brother. I gave him a hug and told him how much I missed him. He looked at me and said, 'Brother, do you still hate white people?' I looked at him and said 'Yes.' He looked real sad and said that I must hate him too because he is part white.

That statement really hurt me because I love him. I learned from a child who was only nine at the time. I have also learned from my culture that a true human being will accept people, not because of the colour of their skin, but because of who they are inside their hearts. An elder once told me everything that bleeds red is my relation. I am not racist any more thanks to the help of my little brother."

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS:

- Why does Colin get angry and hate whites?
- How do stereotypes hurt self-esteem?
- Native prayers often end with the phrase, "And all my relations." What does this mean?
- Do you know what a round dance is?



Personal Story: Painful TV images.



"A stand-off then occurred between my people (the Mohawks) and the Canadian army. You cannot imagine the pain these images cause."

Chad is 20 yrs. old and is a Mohawk of Kahnawake near Montreal.

"In June of 1990, there was a series of events in Quebec which have been labelled the 'Mohawk Crisis.' Blockades were raised to surround two Mohawk reserves – Kahnawake and Kanesatake. A stand-off then occurred between my people (the Mohawks) and the Canadian army, the RCMP, and the Sureté du Quebec. This situation lasted 78 days, during which many racist and frightening events took place.

One such event still raises, to this day, feelings of rage and helplessness. It is the time when Mohawk families tried to leave the reserve in a peaceful way and were attacked by non-native rioters. As a

caravan of people (Mohawk) left the reserve, they were stoned with pieces of concrete and rocks. Many people were hurt in this incident and the Provincial Police and by-standers, who were there at the scene, did nothing but watch as my people were attacked in this manner.

You cannot imagine the pain these images cause everytime they are seen on T.V. It's so real that you think it only happened yesterday. For my people this pain will last for generations to come, unless some healing between our peoples begins soon."

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS:

- How do images of racism on TV affect members of an attacked group, even if they aren't directly experiencing racism?
- What do you know about the political organization of First Nations peoples before Europeans arrived ?
- What does the term "consensual democracy" mean? Ovide Mercredi, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, believes it is a native concept that can help heal divisions in our land.
- Understand. Chad, a member of our Students Commission team, identifies himself as a Mohawk, not a Canadian.

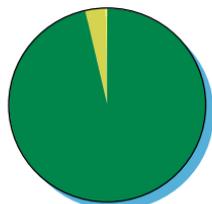
The Mohawks lived in the Mohawk Territory, throughout Canada and the United States, before Canada was politically created. Chad thinks of Canada as a land he loves, not as a political unit. His political unit is the Mohawk Nation and he thinks of Canadians as people who share this land called Canada with his people and other First Nations peoples.

Individual action

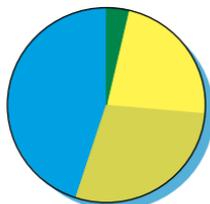
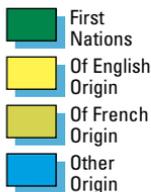
How can I increase awareness of Native culture and perspectives around me?

- Make morning announcements that introduce the different aspects of Native culture, history and contributions.
- Make a video about living on a reserve or in a city from a Native perspective. You may want to do this with a group.
- Bring Native leaders in to conduct a pow wow. Elders (native leaders) can educate students on various native traditions.
- Bring in Native youth groups to run youth-to-youth workshops in your classes.
- Devise your own historical unit on Native culture and decide, with a teacher, to present it as a project, a one-class group activity, or as a week or longer unit lesson.
- Challenge stereotypical comments.

THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE



(circa. 1660)



NOW

First Nations people were here in Canada first. Within the First Nations community in Canada, there are many different aboriginal nations, speaking many different languages.



Video quote: "If you're Indian and you don't know what you are, then you'll be lost. You won't know who you are, who you will be. You won't know. So you have to go back and you have to see who you are, find yourself."

Robin Blackmon is 18 yrs. old and lives in Canoe Narrows, Saskatchewan.

**Quietly
and
consistently
educate.**

Group action

How can I get others to get involved?

- Your class or activity group can create a display about a current or historical issue from the First Nations point of view.
- Find an interested teacher to help you arrange and finance an exchange with a class in a school on a Native reserve.
- Find or create some curriculum and activity ideas for interested teachers in your school and encourage them to do them.
- Show the video chapter on First Nations from The Students Commission video which accompanies this Guide and discuss it.
- Suggest your teacher get a copy of the *Let's Stop Racism Teachers' Guide* (see resources at the back of this guide) from Canadian Heritage. Unit 5: Junior High can be adapted for use after viewing the video or reading any of the personal stories written here.
- Consult the National Film Board's *Native Visions Video Guide* for its videos.
- Hold a group or in-class discussion using this guide. Use the personal stories and issues as assignments.



Personal Story: Battling stereotypes.



“He figured that Native people had trouble speaking English and that they belonged at the basic or general levels.”

Bobby Narcisse is 22 yrs. old and attending university in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

“In order for Native youth to get a higher education than elementary school in Northern areas, they must leave their communities nine months of the year to go to school in regional cities like Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Whitehorse and others. There are no high schools in their communities. Some of these students have never left their reserves or experienced the predominant white culture before. Going away to high school is a difficult experience. Many are affected by racism.

My experience, in particular, saw me entering a high school where the vice-principal was ill-informed about Native people. He figured that Native people had trouble speaking English and that they belonged at the basic or general levels. As well, certain members of the student body made it uncomfortable for me to participate in class discussions. Don't you hate it when sometimes you are the only Native person in the class when Native issues are discussed? There are those who would say outright that Native people are

always getting a free ride in ‘getting things for free.’ If they only knew that Native people have paid their dues by allowing Europeans to exploit this country through its natural resources, i.e. forestry, mineral rights. Also, the history of systemic oppression brought on by this country's government over the years tried to assimilate Native people into the main stream by the establishment of Residential Schools and prohibited Native people from practicing the Native culture. There are reasons why Natives have these benefits . Through positive education about Canada's first peoples in various school curriculums, people may become more informed about Native issues.”

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS:

- Why might Native students have difficulty leaving their community to go to high school?
- Why might some people dislike the benefits Native people receive?
- Explore the issue of Native land claims and treaties made with governments. Has the Canadian government always honoured these treaties?
- Bobby's vice-principal assumed he was a basic student because he was Native. What impact would it have on your self-esteem and performance if others underestimated your abilities simply because of your appearance?



STUDENTS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

- We should have courses on Native culture given by Natives in order to eliminate racism existing in our history lessons. (1992)
- We should all take responsibility to talk to Natives about each others' respective communities, to abolish stereotypes, put aside our fears, and organize events in our regions such as "pow wows" or legend nights in order to incorporate Native culture. (1992)
- We should promote the study of Native culture and history in our schools. (1991)

CHANGING THE SYSTEM: Putting recommendations into action

How do I get my teachers to incorporate this into our class work?

- Question the accuracy and the portrayal of Natives in your texts and class materials. Is it portrayed from the European point of view? What would be the Native viewpoint on the same material? Find material that presents the Native point of view. Educationally, you, your fellow students and your teachers will be expanding your knowledge and developing analytical and critical thinking skills.
- Create a group that researches and supplies your teachers, library, and student groups with easy access to materials and information that present First Nations history, culture, and points of view on past and current issues. See activities for how to publicize your research.

MEASURES OF CHANGE

How do I know that things are changing?

- Create a survey and survey your school or a class at the beginning of your project. Survey them again afterwards, to see if there is a greater awareness of Native issues and culture in your peers and teachers and less stereotypical assumptions. Have an interested teacher help you.
- Keep a sign-out log for your resource material. How much is it being used?
- Involve Native students in your activity. Ask them to measure the impact of the project.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Where can I turn to for help with all this?

- If you'd like to host a Native event or invite Native people to visit your school, you can contact the following groups to find out how to get in touch with the Native people in your region: local Native Friendship Centers, First Nations Bands (Communities), Assembly of First Nations and its associates, Native Youth Groups, TG Magazine and The Students Commission.



"We, the youth of Canada, recognize that all individuals are equal and are committed to working towards achieving similar opportunities for all." 1994 Students Commission Report

2 Coming to Canada

... a shared heritage

All Canadians, other than the First Nations peoples, share the immigration experience in their cultural history of the past 500 years. The early immigrants from France, England, Ireland, Scotland and the United States came here for the same reasons that immigrants come now. Canada offered economic opportunities, freedom from oppression and famine, with the promise of a better life.

Why study our history? Perhaps because you will see patterns which repeat and be able to show others how not to fear the present.

Our history is a series of immigration waves – people leaving homelands and families they loved, because life in their country of departure was difficult. The First Nations peoples welcomed the early

explorers and immigrants, guided them through the vast landscape and showed them how to survive. Canada offered hope and so group after group arrived.

In your family history will be a parent, grandparent, great grandparent, or great great grandparent who lived the immigration experience and knew what it feels like to leave the familiar behind and come to a new land, with new languages, challenges and ways of doing things.

Immigrants, past and present, struggle to adjust to the new and to maintain their identity with traditions from their past. Groups already established often resist and fear the new influences. Think about all the "groups" that used to be new and strange, and now are considered normal or "Canadian," while other groups are labelled immigrants or "foreigners." Resistance to immigrants is usually just fear of the unknown, fear of change, but it's also usually racist.

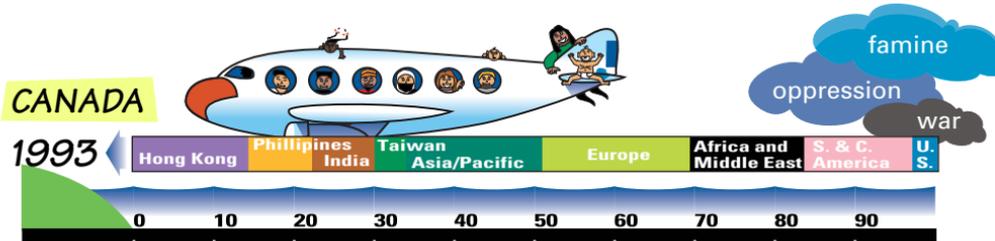
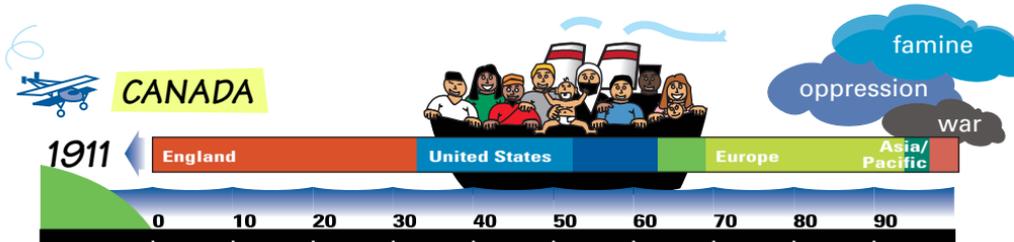
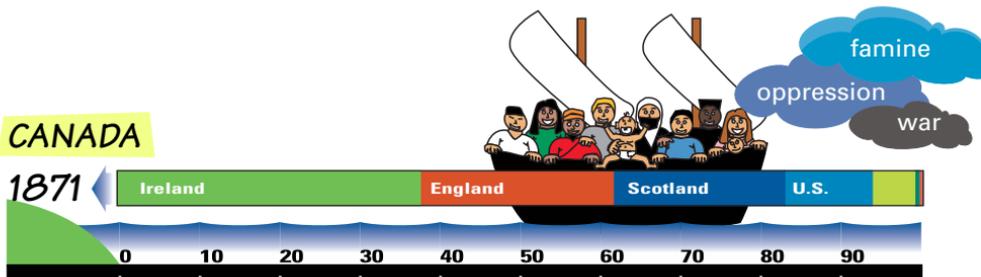
What to say to an anti-immigrant racist... "And where are you from?"

A STRONG STEADY TIDE

A STRONG TIDE
A STEADY TIDE

Immigrating, bringing some of your culture with you, adjusting, preserving, while creating a new culture here, are part of the Canadian way.

The earliest immigrants to Canada in the 1600s and 1700s,



OUR STRENGTH IS PEOPLE

Canada has always actively recruited immigrants to help Canada keep pace in the world, by expanding the labour force, the population, and the Canadian consumer market. Immigration is a fundamental part of Canada's history and development. People need not fear it.

Personal Story: Getting comfortable



“I wasn’t comfortable making friends with people from other ethnic groups.”

Anna is 17 yrs. old and is from Vancouver, British Columbia.

“Moving to Canada was probably the most difficult experience that I ever encountered. I remember having to leave my friends, my nanny, my grandparents. Leaving the Philippines was severing my identity, but I knew that I didn’t have much of a future there, so the promise that I’d have a better life in Canada brought me to accept living in this new land.

When I came to Canada, I tried to establish my own emotional connections, but things were never the same. The people, the food, the traditions – all these things didn’t have the same familiarity to me as things from the Philippines.

I latched onto whatever reminded me of my hometown, no matter how friendly my classmates were. I tried being friends with Caucasians, East Indians, etc., but I always seemed to find more solace in befriending people from the Philippines.

I guess that was my comfort zone.

For some reason, I wasn’t comfortable making friends with people from other ethnic groups. I felt very inferior when I was with them. This was probably because of my hard accent, awkward English and different mindset. In their presence, I’d withdraw from them, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible.

When I later realized the importance of being with people from a variety of cultures, I felt terrible. It became so difficult later on to make friends with them because it was difficult to break out of the mentality and habit of ignoring people. I just wish that I had been able to do so sooner and I wish the people around me would have done the same.”

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS:

- Discuss why you think Anna wasn’t comfortable making friends with people from other groups.
- Anna says she felt inferior. What made her feel inferior?
- Why do you think Anna says it is important to be with people of other cultures?
- Where are you or your ancestors from? Can you make the connection between the experiences of recent immigrants and your past?
- What are some of the issues facing immigrant youth?

Personal Story: Adjusting to change



"The feeling of being Canadian has erased the feeling of being an immigrant."

Ryan is 18 yrs. old and is from Thunder Bay, Ontario.

"Differences and adjustment are the things which make the transition to a new culture difficult. Changes in language, food, value systems, traditions and friends may seem like easy things to change, but remember the last time you changed schools or moved neighbourhoods.

Immigrants often group together for support and comfort, as they deal with these major adjustments in their lives. The values, traditions and customs of the land they just left are important to help them deal with the feeling of being swallowed up by their strange and new environment.

If the new group is large and significant enough, the established dominant culture becomes fearful that the new culture will challenge it, that members of the new culture will never become 'Canadian.'

History shows this not to be so, but young people are usually the bridge between adjusting cultures. They often feel the friction, and have to find the way to preserve, learn and blend. They must balance the values of their parents who

grew up in a different land with their own desires and experiences growing up in Canada. These generational conflicts can run deep. A clash is created because of the desire to maintain the traditions of the old country while their children wish to latch onto the traditions of the new country.

For me, and others like me who have been here for a generation or two, the feeling of being Canadian has erased the feeling of being an immigrant. However, I think we must never lose sight of the fact that all Canadians, except First Nations peoples, are immigrants to this country and that ancestors, parents or grandparents suffered and sacrificed to reach Canada. to escape from famine, war, and religious, social and political persecution. If those of us who no longer remember our immigrant past learned our personal histories, we might relate better, and without fear, to the experiences of new Canadians joining us now. Just as some immigrants today are searching to create a better life for themselves and their children, my forefathers sought out these same things. (They immigrated from Ireland in the 1880s.)"

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS:

- Explore your family history.
- What factors in our lives make us comfortable on a day-to-day basis? Why is it difficult to adjust to change quickly?
- Someone who has lived in Canada a long time might ask why there is such a big deal about blending two different cultures. Explore why.

Group Action

Trans-cultural issues that you or your class should discuss and evaluate:

- Discuss being an outsider, family and cultural traditions, teen dating, immigration procedures...
- Help students explore what it's like to move into a new surrounding. Imagine moving to a totally new neighbourhood or select a country and get ready to move there. What wouldn't you know? What would you need to find out?
- Teachers could take their students through a mock immigration process including filling out the application form and conducting an interview. This should teach the student the tedious steps and stresses of the immigration process.
- As a class, discuss the traditions you have in your family now. Discuss how the traditions from your culture have changed for you and will change for your children. How did these changes affect your parents?
- Dating often causes generational conflicts between parents and teenagers. List some examples of conflicts involving family ethnic values and the prevailing culture seen on media.

At one point or another, we've all been outsiders to a group. Whenever you see someone in that position, remember how you felt and take steps to help that person, like someone probably once helped you become comfortable!

- Play a game called Bafa-Bafa. Form separate groups. Each group has to create their own simple language, value system, special customs and traditions. In particular, identify several behaviours that are considered offensive in your culture. Then, individuals from one group visit the other group and vice versa. Each tries to communicate to the other without offending, but you can't explain right away what the offensive behaviour is. By doing this activity, we are simulating the experience of an "outsider." The purpose of Bafa-Bafa is to provide the experience of being in a foreign culture to those who haven't travelled or are not familiar with the difficulties associated with the immigrant experience.

LARGER SCALE PROGRAMS

- Hold a mini UN conference to discuss an issue or issues that are important on the international stage. Students would spend time researching their given country through books, magazines, newspapers, embassies and through personal interviews with members of that community. They then must represent the point of view of that country, not their own. Their research will help them understand the point of view of another country or culture and be more accepting when dealing with that culture in their daily lives.
- Establish programs in which new immigrant students are paired up with friendly people who become their "buddies" and help them integrate into the school community.

RACISM EATS UP OPEN MINDS



RACISTS CAN'T COMPETE

CONCEPT CREATED BY ANDREW O'MALLEY

- Encourage and set-up “partnering” connections between individual student volunteers and new immigrant families. They would spend time with them and get to know them and their culture. By doing so they would gain a new understanding and be able to share it. This would go a long way to destroying stereotypes on both sides.
- Promote understanding of religious groups in your community by hosting interfaith meetings that allow people to understand the benefits of each religion.
- Help create and promote the creation of an immigration museum in your school in a display and on a computer database that tells the immigration history of every student in your school. Form a research group to help those students who don’t know how to trace their history.
- Organize Citizenship Reaffirmation ceremonies in your school.
- Find the diaries or stories of some early immigrants: Susanna Moodie, Lady Simcoe, Champlain, Samuel Hearne. Compare them to the stories and diaries of modern immigrants, or Anna’s story. What are the similarities of feelings and experiences?
- Have your class do the following from the *Let’s Stop Racism Teachers’ Guide*: Unit 3: Integration (Junior) or try Unit #2: People who Matter (Senior High). The Catalogue Number is Ci-96-26/2- 1993-1E/F, Canadian Heritage, Communications Branch, Canadian Heritage, 15 Eddy St., Hull, Québec, K1A 0M5 (819) 994-0055.

Individual Action

I’m a recent immigrant - what do I do?

- Go to a guidance counsellor and ask for suggestions.
- If there are peer helpers, turn to them. Join the multicultural group or equity group.
- Try not to be too shy to accept the kindness of those around you. Keep in mind that they are probably a little shy too. Volunteer information about yourself. They may be curious but afraid of seeming stupid if they ask.

How can I make new immigrants feel more comfortable?

- If you see someone who is new and alone, go and introduce yourself. Invite them to lunch.
- Be curious, but not aggressive. Let them know that you value what they know about a different country and that you are interested in learning about them and their culture. Don’t be afraid to seem stupid. Read Anna’s story. If the person speaks another language, be patient and try your best to communicate. Speak slowly, but not loudly. If you know someone who speaks that language, ask them to act as an interpreter. Introduce the new student to other new immigrants or students who speak that language. Gather some eager friends and create a welcoming committee that meets new students, shows them around, introduces them to other students and creates a more friendly environment.



STUDENTS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage social interaction between different cultural groups. (1992)
- Incorporate a series of class projects in which children are assigned a culture foreign of their own and research it for a short period of time and then present new ideas in front of their class. (1993)
- Curriculum should include ethnic cultures and their role in Canadian history.

CHANGING THE SYSTEM: Putting recommendations into action

- Ensure that the background cultures, histories and heritages of all ethnocultural groups in Canada are known by all students and teachers in your school. Make resource material readily available. Encourage an environment of genuine curiosity, comfortable interest, and opportunity for exchange between different groups, cultures and religions.
- Omission is exclusion. In your studies, and discussions ensure that your examples represent the points of view and the achievements of many different groups. We live in a global village. Go global in your educational studies. The curriculum must recognize role models and content from more than European culture and history.

MEASURES OF CHANGE

- Do students in your school group more by common areas of interest, or by skin colour, ethnicity, or language? Survey your cafeteria throughout the year.
- Identify barriers between recent and not so recent immigrants. See if you can decrease them. Is there increased interaction during social activities, during lunch and in the library or class room? Is there a better sense of harmony in all groups?
- What level of sensitivity is shown by students and teachers to new immigrants?

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- It would be helpful to find interested teachers, and convince them to help you with what you are working towards. They can assist and help you organize and get other staff and administration on board. Most Boards now have official policies.
- Your librarian or local multicultural association can help you locate more specific information. Your phone book may list local cultural groups. Present first to people you know are interested, then these people can help you with a future presentation.
- The Constitution of Canada is behind you; it recognizes the importance of preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians.



Listen — Understand
Respect — Communicate
Act —

These are the principles and the process of The Students Commission, which have given us the tools to write this guide and our recommendations.

3 Living in Canada

Members of The Students Commission do not all have the same idea about what living in Canada or being Canadian means, but we do agree that acting upon our principles of listen, understand, respect and communicate has taught us how to work together. We have made friends across substantial differences in beliefs, languages and values, and we communicate together across vast spaces in our shared landscape to put our ideas into action.

In four years of work, these are some of the ideas and recommendations we are beginning to put into action through our own efforts:

LISTEN

COMMUNICATE

“Through The Students Commission we hope to eliminate the ignorance and misunderstandings which prevent us from achieving an environment of racial, cultural and environmental harmony.”

1993 Students Commission Report

UNDERSTAND

“Ignorance is the cause of most of our problems. We have discovered here that when people begin to get to know each other, we can reach compromises.”

1991 Students Commission Report

RESPECT

“We call for better promotion of Canada, and more opportunity for Canadians to meet and understand each other on an individual level. This is money well spent, building better communications and relationships among people from different parts of the country.”

1991 Students Commission Report

“You’ve got to know who you are...”

IDENTITY

“I don’t have a culture,” said one of our team in making this guide. Someone else said, “Of course you do. Travel to another country, live there, and you’ll discover your culture quickly.” Use this chart to start trying to define your idea of Canada.

CANADA

How the world sees us

How do people from around the world view Canada?

How we see ourselves

How do we portray ourselves? Do we take a positive or negative approach to defining ourselves?



“We must know who we are, before we can determine where we are going. We must also be educated by people who are knowledgeable themselves. Our media and our teachers and our politicians have failed to help us understand the issues.”

1991 Students Commission Report

MY IDENTITY

How I see Me

Explore what makes you who you are: personality, likes, dislikes, family environment, where you live, who you know, language, religion, culture, heritage, values and beliefs. You are you, unique, and you are also part of a connected series of larger circles or systems, which influence you and which you can influence.

My Community

My Political

Different Points of View

“Being Canadian means freedom, being able to express my opinions. It means family. My family is all here. It also means opportunities. I know if my family lived elsewhere they would not have the same opportunities that we have here.” Bindu Dhaliwal

“We wish Québec to stay in Canada, while respecting why some of our French Québec friends feel it would be better if Québec left. We now understand why. We believe it will be devastating if Québec leaves. However, we recognize that if things stay the same Québec will leave. We have to do more than listen, and it will take effort to change. We believe change begins with individual efforts.”

1991 Students Commission Report

“ I live in Canada, but I do not consider myself Canadian. I am Mohawk. My nation and my people and our system of government were established before Canada was. But I am glad to share this land called Canada with others, and work together to make it possible for all peoples to live and work together. We are all members of one race.”
Chad Diabo

Environment

HOW OTHERS SEE

me



my community



my

political

environment



What does being Canadian mean?

1

ANSWER ONE

A Canadian is a citizen of Canada. You become a citizen either by birth (being born inside the political boundaries of Canada or to Canadian parents), or by choice, after living in Canada for at least three years and then taking the Oath of Citizenship in a formal procedure after passing a Citizenship test.

ANSWER TWO

Your own personal definition of what being a Canadian is and means.

3

ANSWER THREE

A collective definition of what being a Canadian means determined by a dominant or majority group of Canadians.

ANSWER FOUR

The way the rest of the world defines or sees Canadians. Sometimes others see us more clearly than we see ourselves.

Personal Story: A struggle to define



“Racism spreads faster in large, homogeneous groups where people think their beliefs are superior.”

Pascale is 24 yrs. old and is from Laval, Québec.

“Canadian society is multicultural, multiracial, multifaith and multilingual.

When you limit yourself to the influence of one group, you prevent yourself from learning about Canadian culture.

Canada’s greatest asset is diversity.

At one extreme there is the uniqueness of the individual and at the other extreme, all citizens of the earth. Somewhere in the middle lies a Canadian identity.

There is a misbelief that Canadians don’t have a culture. If you were put in a small village in another country, you would discover your culture. By getting to know other cultures, we get to know our own. Racism often emerges when people feel insecure about who they are. You have to know who you are. Then you have to get to know others.

Confront your own culture. Can you define your culture? Can you pinpoint differences and similarities between your background and others?

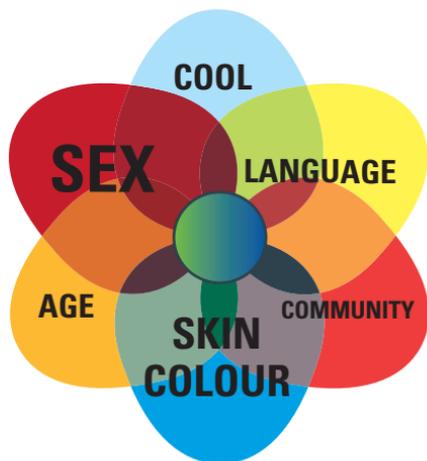
Are these different enough that you can talk about a different culture? Racism spreads faster in large, homogeneous groups where people think their beliefs are superior.”

Responsible citizenship means that each individual contributes to the enhancement and maintenance of a unified community.

Racism is a learned response. It is important for the youth of Canada to become a positive force in their communities to help their peers.



Our team came from many different backgrounds and languages. People define themselves in different ways depending on what grouping they are using at the time. Groups often overlap.



Activities

- Being Canadian is being willing to go and get to know each other in the different regions of this vast and beautiful country. Travel and appreciate the rest of the country.
- Learn about our heritage from one coast to another and learn about the diverse cultures within our Canadian culture.
- Explore and define how we see ourselves and how others see us: in the context of country, community, ethnocultural group, individual. Example: Canada is seen as a humanitarian, multicultural country that is willing to learn and accept many different people. How do Canadians see the country as a whole?
- How I see myself (individual) may be different from how people see me. Explore. Use the charts here to help.
- How does one community see another? Pick different communities. Examine what the media portrayal is. From what point of view is it written? How does the portrayal affect the self-image of the group, individual or community?

Discussion

- What are the values of Canadians?
- What does it mean to be Canadian?
- What makes up Canada?
- Canada is a constantly changing place. Are we ready to move away from the status quo?
- A teacher opens a student's agenda and sees a swastika drawn. What should the teacher do?

CULTURE

is the container or context in which we live, a combination of our **values, beliefs and the normal way** of doing things (norms) in our group or community. Most of our culture we absorb unconsciously from our parents, from our surroundings and from day to day living and experiences. Our culture shapes our behaviour and attitudes. Often, what we think of as "normal" is only normal in the context of our own particular culture or context.

Values are general ideas and opinions about desirable goals or standards. Example: In Canada we think that democratic decision-making is good and that having a job is important.

Beliefs are particular opinions about the nature of the world (its past, present and future), about cause and effect relations, or about what should be. Examples: You need a good education to get a good job. People should not starve.

The normal way or norms are informal understandings, rules, or formal laws that guide or regulate the behaviour of people in specific situations: the "normal" way. Examples: Different cultures have different customs about how to eat at meal time. Eating with your left hand is rude in some parts of the world. Eating with your knife is rude in other situations.

"This guide asks you to take action against racism and discrimination to help create a country where there is equity and justice for all.

We believe that taking action against inequity and injustice is a fundamental responsibility of citizenship.

We have also concluded, through our discussions and workshops, that people need certain tools to be able to explore and understand the issues and to be able to take action effectively.

First is knowledge. We must know who we are, so that we can be secure enough as individuals not to be threatened by others.

We must be secure enough to be able to listen genuinely to others and get to know them.

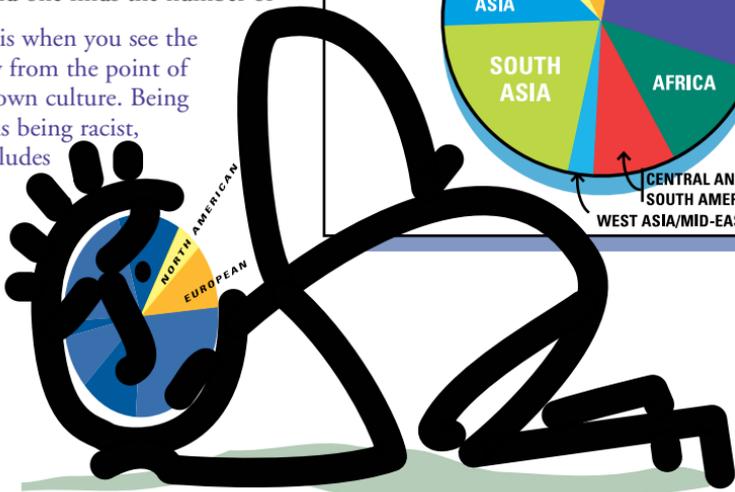
We must be secure enough about ourselves to develop curiosity and a willingness to learn about and include others."

Identity: People have a series of identities. First, as unique individuals, then as a series of ever-larger, and often overlapping groups: family, community, culture, race, religion, geographical region, language, clubs, age, areas of interest, type of work, political environment (town, province, country), continental and global. These are just some of the "group" words used by people to identify themselves and others.

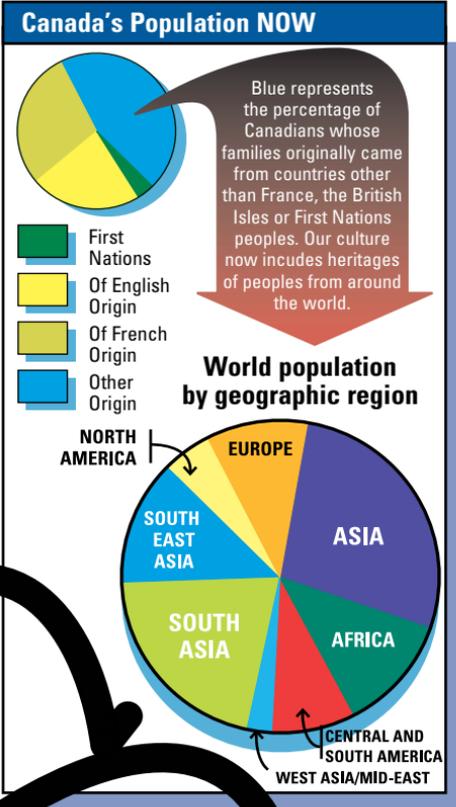
Ethnic: The word “ethnic” is used to define, recognize and group the differences between members of the human species. The term acknowledges that factors such as culture, country of birth, language, religion, skin colour, history, traditions and customs may give people who share those same influences a “common identity,” a shared understanding and way of looking at the world. It is important to remember that groups are made up of individuals and not all individuals in any one group will fit the stereotype of that group. What is interesting is that often in discussions of culture and ethnicity, people think of “ethnic” or “multicultural” as terms referring only to “minority” groups.

Race: The term “race” usually categorizes members of the human species into groups based on skin colour and physical characteristics. There are a number of different classification systems being used, and one finds the number of

Ethnocentric is when you see the world entirely from the point of view of your own culture. Being ethnocentric is being racist, because it excludes others. How much do we know about others?



racess listed varying from 3 to 40. Migration around the world, changing social norms, political and cultural influences, and who is doing the defining, change how the term “race” is defined. Often factors such as country of origin, culture and religion are included in definitions of racial groups.



Personal Story: Why talk about it?



“In the black community, I get accused of being too white... Puuullleese people ... get with it.”

Denise is 19 yrs. old and is from Oshawa, Ontario.

**Why even talk about racism?
I’m not a minority?**

“In Canada, there is a tendency to believe that racism is a phenomenon that occurs in other countries like the United States between black and white people. There has also been a tendency to believe that racism is a problem of the minority, so they should be left to figure it out because it doesn’t affect white people. Some members of racial or ethnic minorities have also felt that because they haven’t faced racism, it doesn’t really exist. Even some who face it on a daily basis feel that others who are pushing for change are only “rocking the boat” and causing “racial backlash” from the majority.

People who believe that racism doesn’t affect them, are closing their eyes to a serious problem that promotes hate and actions of hate. No one benefits by keeping silent, because the problem won’t go away. Those that think they are safe from discrimination today may find themselves being discriminated against tomorrow....”





STUDENTS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be more exchanges between students of different provinces. (1991)
- As Canadians, we must learn not to judge others based on gender, language, sexual orientation, social status, appearance or religion. (1992)
- All Canadians must be culturally sensitized through education, communication and personal interaction. (1994)
- The Students Commission recommends that everyone, especially young people of Canada, stand up for their rights when they have been offended by racists' actions or words. (1992)
- We believe students should become involved in shaping their educational environment. (1994)

CHANGING THE SYSTEM: Putting recommendations into action

- The school can host a one day, one week or month-long cultural diversity campaign (see example agendas) to learn about the diverse cultures within our Canadian culture. You can organize exchanges or a mini Students Commission conference.
- A geography or history class can survey the school and determine everyone's country of origin and culture and design a school-wide display to showcase diversity.
- Develop a mechanism for youth to report racist actions or comments, and a mechanism for dealing with them, agreed upon by students and staff.
- Do Unit Lesson #7: Discovering Others from the Canadian Heritage, *Let's Stop Racism Teachers' Guide*.

SOME MEASURES OF CHANGE

- Students from your school know about and have visited many parts of Canada.
- Tolerance for different languages and interest in studying them goes up.
- Role models and examples of Canadian achievements routinely include examples from many different ethnocultural groups and world history, not just European.
- The number of racist incidents reported to the mechanism you created goes down.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- To learn about Canada or to set up an exchange try using SchoolNet to ask interested students or teachers from other provinces to link with you. Check out the Canadian Directory of Schools and link up with another school in another province.

4

Racism and Individuals



“We, the youth of Canada, recognize that all individuals are equal and are committed to working towards achieving similar opportunities for all.”

1994 Students Commission Report

What if I’m alone and need help to deal with racist situations? This section deals with how racism affects you and what you can do about it. In most cases, no one has ever taught us how to stand up for ourselves and others in racist situations. As a result, it is easy to feel

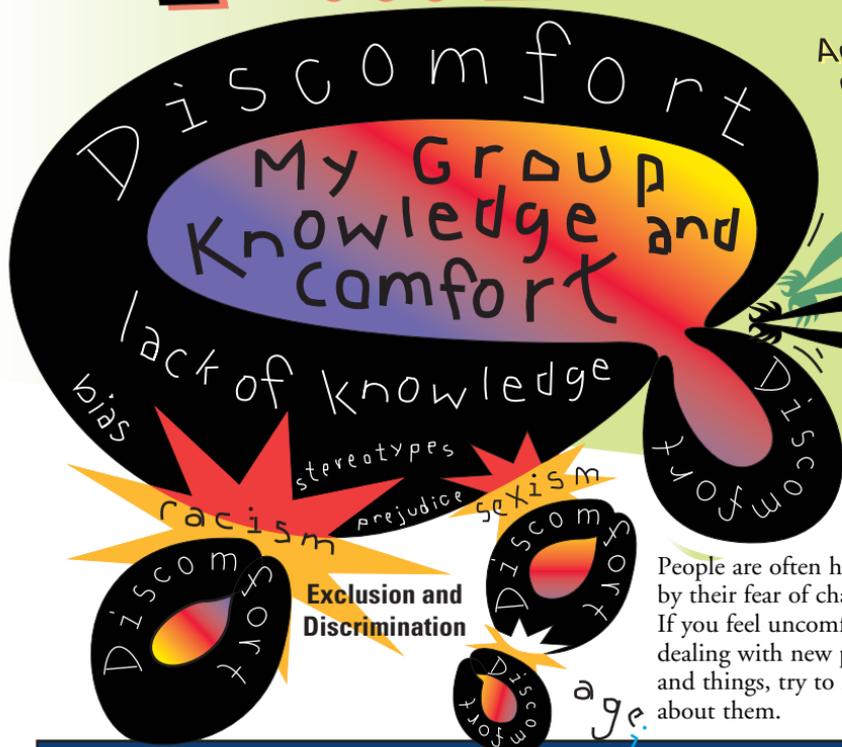
“We must fight racism by standing up to our peers if they do, act or say something racist. Put yourself in someone else’s place and think about how you would react to a racist comment.”

1992 Students Commission Report

alone, uncomfortable, hurt, powerless, and even ashamed of who you are. The first step to fighting racism on an individual basis is being comfortable enough with who you are to be able to stand up for yourself. Equip yourself and those around you with the knowledge of how to deal with problems before you are confronted. You can make a difference. Racism is not a problem that is too big to fight. We need not sit back and wait for others to erase racism for us. Young people have the power to fight racism as long as we do not wait, we utilize all the resources around us, and we remember that we have a right to not be offended and intimidated by others. Individuals and their actions make the difference - it’s people that erase racism!

THE EXCLUSIVE LIFE of ISMS

Agents of Change



Inclusion
Mutual
Respect

People are often held back by their fear of change. If you feel uncomfortable dealing with new people and things, try to learn more about them.

EXCLUSION: a way of discrimination

- RACISM:** is when you discriminate against others on the basis of race.
- SEXISM:** is when you discriminate against others on the basis of gender.
- ABLEISM:** is when you discriminate against others on the basis of disability.
- AGEISM:** is when you discriminate against others on the basis of age.
- ????? :** **What other forms of discrimination can you think of?**
-
-

Personal stories: Racial jokes hurt



"I just sat there while everybody laughed. I still feel uncomfortable and unsure of myself."

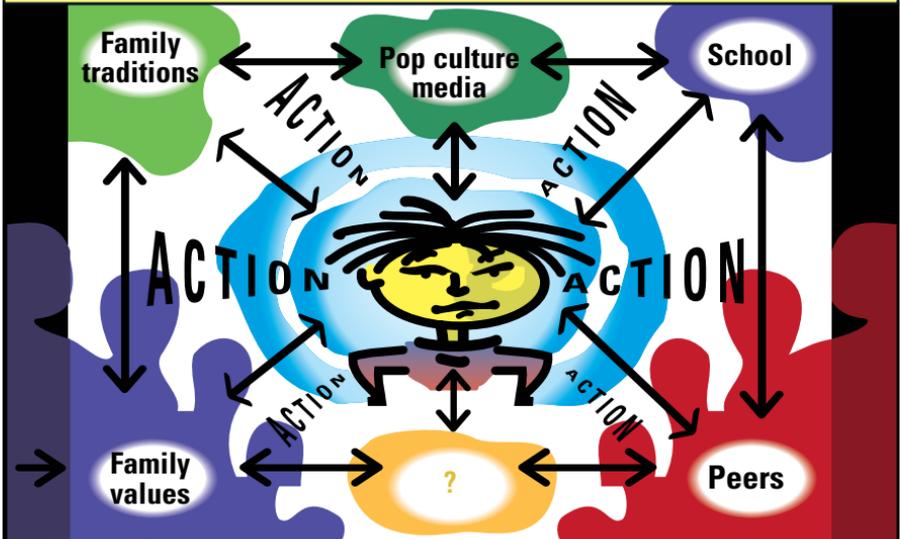
Donna Lee is 16 yrs. old and lives in Carmen, Manitoba.

"When I was younger, I used to be terrified of going to school. Being at school wasn't what scared me the most, it

was getting there. I had always felt odd on our school bus because I was clearly the minority on the bus, and even at school. The kids always teased me and hit me as I sat on the bus totally helpless. So many of the people who were against me didn't even know me. So I just sat there while everyone stared and laughed. I still feel uncomfortable and unsure of myself, and fear that people will not accept me for who I am. I cried a lot. Nobody did anything when they saw it happen. They just laughed along. Even the adults did nothing. They thought it was normal for children to act this way!"

Pressure points and influences on an individual

Influences can help you deal positively with pressure or add to the pressure. All elements of our lives interact with each other. Your actions can change the way individuals feel the pressure from these influences.



ISSUES AND DISCUSSION:

What do I do when I see someone being laughed at or teased?

What do I do when I am being laughed at, teased or discriminated against?

What do I do when I hear racist or ethnic jokes?

- “BY OMISSION YOU GIVE PERMISSION.” If you do not speak up for yourself and others, the joke-tellers will perceive it as permission to continue with their actions.
- Tell the joke-teller you do not appreciate the joke/comment, eg. “I find your comment offensive.”
- Explain the difference between what they intended with the joke and how others may perceive it.
- Discourage the joke-teller by letting him/her know that the racial joke hurts people, makes them feel powerless, insulted and degraded. It creates a climate which leads to fighting and mistrust and to other forms of discriminatory behaviours.
- If it becomes a serious problem, talk to someone you trust (friend, teacher or counsellor).

EXPLORE THE PRESSURES AN INDIVIDUAL YOUTH FEELS:

When you challenge people and they know they are wrong, they are likely to be angry and aggressive. Discuss how you deal with this anger and aggression.

Myth

Myth#1: Racial jokes are just meant to be funny and no real harm is done.

Reality: Racial jokes or slurs are never positive; they focus on negative attributes and differences between groups.

Myth#2: Nobody is hurt by racial jokes.

Reality: We all have some hidden area of vulnerability which could cause pain or embarrassment if exposed.

Myth#3: If it bothered them they should say something.

Reality: Just because they don't speak up does not mean that it doesn't hurt. Often people are reluctant to speak up because they don't want to rock the boat.

Myth#4: How can they mind when I have often heard them tell the same jokes to each other?

Reality: There is a difference between laughing or making fun of yourself and having others laugh at your expense.

Myth#5: It's a free country; what are you going to do, ban humour?

Reality: Freedom of speech doesn't give you the right to offend others. Everyone has the right to an harassment-free environment.

How often does someone's aggression and anger keep us from speaking up when we know we should, when we know we are right? How does not speaking up make us feel? How do we prevent feeling like it's our fault even when it's others who are wrong?

If the comment is from the teacher, tell them calmly that "I find your comment offensive. Please stop."

This allows the teacher to correct the mistake. If the teacher does not stop, go to the front office and sit until someone asks why you are there. Explain the situation. This is a non-confrontational way to address the problem, because no one enjoys being backed into a corner.

THINGS TO KNOW:

- Racism is learned... the Golden rule is that anything we learn we can unlearn. You can teach yourself and those around you to accept others for who they are and not who you would like them to be.
- People who say racism doesn't affect them are closing their eyes to a serious problem that promotes hate and actions of hate. We all benefit from a racism-free society.

Personal story: Interracial dating



"Does this sort of thing happen in the 90s? That morning I realized that it still does."

Sameer Farooq is 16 yrs. old and lives in Nova Scotia.

"I was at an International Music Camp and I started to 'go out' with someone. I thought she was the perfect girl. We were soon termed the 'best couple' at camp, and we tried to see as much of each other as we could every day. Then, on the last day of camp, she asked if I wanted to go for a walk, and I said, 'Sure.' During the walk, she told me that she had been thinking a lot lately. Then she said (and I still remember), 'If I tell people at home that I went out with a Muslim, they'll think that I'm a devil worshipper.' I nearly died! Does this sort of thing happen in the 90s? That morning I realized that it still does.

The other people at the camp who knew about us were both shocked and disgusted. I had never been so discriminated against like that before."

What's your story?

1. Have you or anyone you know ever been in such a situation?
2. If so, what happened?
3. How did this make you feel?
4. Would you or any of your friends hang out with someone of a different race or culture? Why or why not?

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Remember, even if the racist comment is not about you, it is wrong. Stand up for others too! Empowering others empowers yourself!

Personal story: Parental disapproval

“My values are in conflict with theirs.”

Anonymous.

“I am a sixteen year old girl. I am involved in an interracial relationship which my parents strongly disapprove of. When they found out that I was going out with a black guy, they were furious. My values are completely in conflict with theirs. My parents keep trying to introduce me to young men ‘of the same kind’ and to people who they say ‘will not cause a problem’. Despite my parents objections, I continued my relationship and soon my entire family and community seemed to be gossiping behind my back. No matter where I go in my community, someone always has something negative to say to me. It seems like everyone is against me. Why can’t they all just leave me alone and accept my decision?”

Issues to discuss:

- Identify the parents’ issues.
- Identify the youth’s issues.
- Explore with others, suggestions on how they deal with situations like this, when your ideas are different than your parents’.

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How to deal with disapproval from friends/parents:

1. Make sure to keep calm and non-confrontational.
2. Explain why you enjoy being with that person.
3. Say that you have learned to accept people for who they are. What really matters is that this person is a good person and values you and your relationship.
4. Be prepared for resistance, especially if parents have strong views in the opposite direction. In the case of friends, if they refuse to accept your relationship with someone of a different race, then you may have to make a choice. Keep in mind that true friends would accept you and your choices for what they are.
5. You cannot choose your parents or easily disown them. If they have taught you to accept everyone, remind them of that. Remind them that they raised you well and taught you good judgement. Some parents may understand the importance of this relationship to you. Some may not. They may see it as not good for you. Their decision may impose a very tough choice for you. Keep trying to educate them.

Above all else, remember who you are. You have a right to be here and to be happy. You also have a responsibility to accept, celebrate and protect other individuals around you. Whenever things look bleak, just believe in the power of one – you!

Personal story: Travelling in a different group

“It is odd for a person to mix with another group ... and I was referred to as white-washed.”

Anonymous.

“At school everyone sticks to their own ethnic group. It is quite odd for a person to mix with another group outside of their own, but I did not want to accept that. I have always been friends with many people who are white so, I decided to hang around with them... simply because they were my friends and simply because they were nice to me.

Unfortunately not everyone wanted to accept my ‘choice of friends.’ I was referred to as ‘white-washed’ and other such derogatory slurs. They think that just because I act differently from them that I am not very ‘cultural’ and they conclude that I am trying to be white. It seems like I don’t match up to their standards. I am not trying to be anyone else. I am just trying to be me.”

Getting others involved:

- Start an Ethno-cultural/Race relations committee.
- Identify barriers to equality in your school environment and find ways to eliminate them.

What do I do when members of my own race call me “white washed”?

- First of all, know that you are right to act however you were meant to act. People who say you do not act “black enough,” for example, are only feeding into the stereotypes of how a particular race or culture should act.
- Be proud of who you are. If you enjoy being with your friends of a different culture then tell the person(s) who claim that you’re being “white-washed” that you are with your friends not because of their skin colour but because they are great people. If they too are your friends, they should respect your choices.
- You can also say that just because you are learning about someone else’s culture does not mean that you are denying or ignoring your own.

How am I suppose to do all the things the “average” teenager does when my cultural traditions differ?

- Never buy into the rationale that “everyone else is doing it” because most of the time, many people can’t, do not want to, or think it uncool to do it.
- Think hard about the reasons why you want to be doing what you think “everybody” else is doing? Is it because you want others to like you or is it because the activity is something you really want to do?



STUDENTS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take the Students Commission Anti-Racist Pledge and encourage others to: “I,...., swear not to pre-judge others based on my fears which arise from ignorance and isolation. I will respect others and remember that it is what is inside that matters the most. I am a human being. I believe that the only race is the human race.” (1992)
- Be sensitive to issues; don't accept racist behaviour. We must fight racism by standing up to our peers if they do, act or say something racist. Put yourself in someone else's place and think about how you would react to a racist comment. (1992)

CHANGING THE SYSTEM

- Develop a zero tolerance for racial jokes/slurs in the classroom and school environment, with help from students and teachers.
- Broaden your own circle of acquaintances. How many people of different cultures do you know? Set up a group designed to get to know others different than you.
- Get school leaders, the school newspaper, the yearbook and teachers to incorporate proactive anti-racism messages in their public statements and lessons.

MEASURES OF CHANGE

- A diminished amount of racial slurs and jokes in the environment, active leadership by teachers and school leaders in stopping and disciplining makers of racial comments.
- Increased participation by minority groups in class and school life; positive feedback.
- A change in attitude reflected by a survey before and after implementing policies. (Remember that not all changes are loud and immediate and not all people will welcome change, but don't be discouraged. Things will happen.)

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- If you have any sort of anti-racism/multicultural committee, peer mediation or any other strong student action group, approach them with your issue or start one.
- Find a teacher that you like and trust, and that is enthusiastic about making an impact.
- Unite and get something going.
- Use the *Let's Stop Racism Teachers' Guide* from Canadian Heritage – the “What are you doing to stop racism?” survey, the Secondary Unit #3: The Laws that Bind, or the Secondary Unit #4: Accepting Others.

5

Systemic Racism at school and work



Systemic racism occurs when people of certain skin colours or races do not have equal access, privileges and representation in a system. Schools , curriculum, places of work, media, housing government and school councils are systems, operating in bigger systems.

“Education provides the key to stop ignorance – the root of racism and prejudice.”

1992 Students Commission Report

“Going Against The Grain”

From the moment that we have the ability to think independently and decipher right from wrong, society conditions us.

Power

Power: access to resources, position, status, wealth, or personal strength of character which gives a person or a group or a system the ability to influence others. Power can be used to affect others positively or negatively.

We are programmed with many preconceived notions that teach us to think and act a certain way. Consequently, we find it difficult to contradict the norm.

Systemic racism is often the underlying cause of a racist incident. At first glance, a racist incident might be blamed on an individual instead of the underlying root of the problem. The only way to combat this is through education about built-in biases in our society. It is clear that racism has subtly seeped into our school textbooks through cultural bias and misrepresentation of certain groups. We must learn to identify and eliminate this from our learning resources.

POWER RELATIONSHIPS

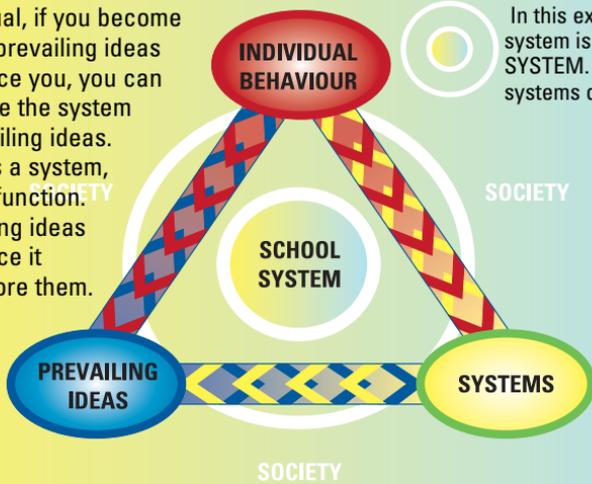
Power relationships, active inside and outside organizations, can be difficult to identify. Though many things influence our day-to-day actions, there are three major forces at work in any social structure:

THE INDIVIDUAL

PREVAILING IDEAS

SYSTEMS

As an individual, if you become aware of the prevailing ideas which influence you, you can help to change the system and the prevailing ideas. Your school is a system, in which you function. It has prevailing ideas which influence it and you. Explore them.



YOUR OWN EXAMPLE(S) OF SYSTEMIC RACISM.

✗ Use the example below as a guide to write your own example(s) of systemic racism in the space provided.

Your Experience	System	Prevailing Ideas	Individual Action
- Few role models of non-European achievers in texts	- Education system - Textbooks, films, role models	- Eurocentric bias means minority groups are seen as "OTHER" – encourages a "We" and "They" attitude	- Research, present alternatives - Challenge the "norm," stereotypes
✗			

Personal Story: Curriculum bias

"In every class and in every textbook, my people have been portrayed as savages."

Anonymous.

"Ever since I started grade school, I have been learning about the history of Canada. In every class and every textbook my people have been portrayed as 'savages.' All of our contributions and efforts have been excluded or misinterpreted. Every time I have asked my teachers about this selectivity they have either brushed it aside or said that they'll 'take care of it later.' I can't understand how the very materials that we are using to educate our youth are so blatantly untrue. I want to challenge the system but I feel like it would be me against the world."

Issues to discuss:

- Identify other stereotypes in the material you study.
- How do biased materials affect your perception of yourself and others?
- What solutions are there when your objections get brushed aside?

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"When something is accepted by the majority, attempts to change norms will be met with resistance. Controversy can be scary, but the basic truth is that we all have the right to live in a racism-free society. That's the law and systems must be changed to reflect it."



Bindu Dhaliwal is 19 yrs. old and lives in Mississauga, Ontario.

Personal Story: Dressing differently

“I feel like many jobs are unavailable to me.”

Anonymous.

“I am a traditional Muslim girl and therefore it is required for me to wear a head-dress called a ‘hijab’ at all times. I feel like many jobs are unavailable to me simply because of this. So many jobs at fast food restaurants, etc. would require me to wear a hat or remove my hijab. I want to apply, but I feel like if I did then I would be challenging an entire system that previously did not include people like me. The other employees may resent me also for getting special treatment. I don’t want to do all that, I just want a job.”

Issues to discuss:

- Can something in the system change to accommodate differences?
- Is being allowed cultural dress considered “special treatment?”
- Is insisting that everybody look the same unfairly excluding certain people?

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HOW ANTI-RACIST IS OUR SCHOOL?

- Are students and parents regularly informed of Board and school race relations policies?
- Do the images in school displays, assemblies and community events positively reflect the cultural diversity of students in the school as a whole?
- Are second languages spoken by pupils in the school used in displays, notices and announcements?
- Are opportunities provided to ensure that new pupils, who are learning English as a Second Language, are welcomed and have an opportunity to work constructively with fluent English speakers?
- Are racist incidents such as name-calling dealt with seriously by the staff and are students regularly consulted about how to deal with such problems and possible solutions?
- Does the material you study include authors from a variety of racial or cultural backgrounds, and do courses stress the contributions of all cultural and racial groups?
- Have you been taught how to detect bias in the materials you study?
- Do students of similar backgrounds stick together in the cafeteria, on teams and in the classroom?
- Does the school encourage extracurricular activities where students can explore their cultural heritage and backgrounds?



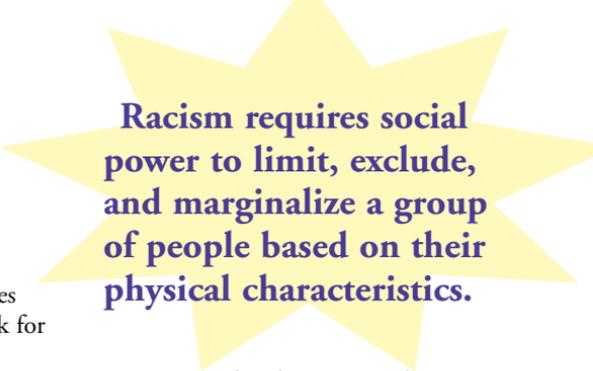
Activities

In your school:

- Organize a curriculum review committee to review your school's learning materials for bias and misrepresentation. Start with resources outlined in the resource section. Look for other material.
- Start mentoring projects with local community groups: police, multicultural groups, service clubs.
- Make sure that training is provided for all peer counsellors and guidance counsellors on cross-cultural understanding, differences, and conflicts.
- Have your class do the following from Canadian Heritage's *Let's Stop Racism Teachers' Guide*: Units 1,3,5 Secondary School.

Within your School Board:

- Form a coalition of students from different schools in your Board. Discuss your concerns and create new ideas and programs which should be implemented. Present your ideas to trustee meetings and/or parent groups. Be vocal and be persistent.
- Lobby your School Board to develop a structure where students can participate: (i.e. student senate) to express their views on matters pertaining to their education.
- Examine your School Board policies on equity issues. Many School Boards have developed policies to address the issue of multiculturalism, but not specifically anti-racism and ethnocultural issues. How do you know?



Racism requires social power to limit, exclude, and marginalize a group of people based on their physical characteristics.

Racism is also the message that one deserves unequal treatment because one is “different”, “lazy”, “un-educated”, “won’t learn English”, “is trying to take over all the professional positions”, “has a chip on the shoulder”, “is only good at math.” These everyday, uneducated comments come from, and give permission for, systemic racism. They are untrue. They are stereotypes, labelling entire groups of individuals, when statistics do not support any of them.

Fighting systemic racism requires changes to systems that have subtly and not so subtly created mechanisms to exclude racial, linguistic and ethnic minorities from the system.

People who have power and opportunities often feel threatened by change. They are afraid that by giving everyone their fair chance to participate and excel (in effect sharing power), they will lose out. They fear they will lose opportunities, positions, pay, etc. However, everyone actually benefits when power is shared.... History also shows this to be true.



STUDENTS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage the media to promote positive, equal representation with more interracial and minority interaction. (1992)
- Write letters to media who broadcast racist and stereotypical roles. (1992)
- Boycott any medium that promotes racism. (1992)
- Student Commissioners should develop workshops to be offered on the causes and effects of gender, racial and religious discrimination. (1993)

CHANGING THE SYSTEM

- Have minority students identify the barriers to their full participation in the system.
- Create a group and a plan to eliminate these barriers step by step.
- Use the laws and existing policies to insist upon changes. You are supported by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and The Multiculturalism Act, 1988.
- Ensure that your school or group has a clear anti-racism policy and program in effect.
- Gather a representative group to begin to create one if it doesn't exist. Set up an enforcement and enactment procedure.
- Create a media watch team. Call, write, to make sure diversity is represented. Include your own school's publications and mailings to parents in your watch.

MEASURES OF CHANGE

- Have guidance counsellors put into effect their new knowledge?
- Are anti-racist ideals being incorporated in the school environment?
- Is there more inclusion of minorities into the curriculum?
- Do images posted in your school automatically reflect diversity of peoples?
- Has there been a creation of an anti-racist/ethnocultural policy?
- Are barriers to participation by minority students diminishing?

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- The Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Check your library.
- The Multicultural Act of Canada, 1988.
- The Canadian and provincial Human Rights Commissions.
- The Canadian Council of Multicultural and Intercultural Educators Association and its provincial affiliates. Contact 204-316 Dalhousie St., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7E7 (613) 241-4499 for help finding the association nearest you or reference material.

6

VIDEO TALK

“Hear what we feel”



“If you want to know what we think, read the Report. If you want to know what we want, what we feel, come talk to us.”

See us on video.
Here we are at The Students
Commission Conference:
Presentation to the Governor
General August, 1994.



“We believe that students should become involved in shaping their educational environment. Student Commissioners should develop workshops to be offered at the elementary level and higher, on the causes and effects of gender, racial and religious discrimination.”

1994 Students Commission Report

The Students Commission Video

We have created three videos from our conferences and workshops to assist others to see and hear what we do and to create programs in their own communities.

“When 200 young people come together.... you realize that you have a lot of power.”

Proceeds from the sale of our Guide and Videos are used to fund our activities.

Video One: 1994 Conference

(24 minutes) This video outlines the whole conference and all of the issues we covered there, as well as profiling six of the delegates in their home communities. This video is professionally shot.

Video Two: Nobody's Born a Racist

(4 video chapters; each 5 minutes)

This video includes highlights from the Conference video, but most of it is student-shot footage from the working sessions where we created this Guide. It directly relates to students' experiences and feelings about racism.

Each chapter of this Guide relates to a sequence in the video. You can show the video, then use the Guide to explore the issues in greater detail.

Discussion Points

Knowing who you are:



"I respect your beliefs and you respect mine. Honour the circle. First thing. There's a lot of energy going through this circle right now. It's a good thing to be a part of a circle. Because it gives you unity."

Colin Head is 21 yrs. old and lives in Mistawasis Reserve, Saskatchewan.

First Nations

"If you're Indian and you don't know what you are, then you'll be lost. You won't know who you are, who you will be. You won't know. So you have to go back and you have to see who you are, find yourself."

Robin Blackmon is 18 yrs. old and lives in Canoe Narrows, Saskatchewan.



yellow spirit, you've got your black spirit, and you've got your white spirit. That's the four colours of every man that walks the earth."

Lionel Horton is 19 yrs. old and lives in Emo, Ontario.



Coming to Canada

"I live close to this, you know, the core of Chinatown and I get exposed to more of Chinese people. And with my family, we have to speak Chinese at home -- that helps. I won't forget my mother language."

Amy Fung and Winnie Yeo are 18 yrs. old and live in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Video Three is a 5-minute promotional video about The Students Commission and what it does.



The Museum

“This is the first time I’ve ever been here. I don’t have any heritage in Antigonish, this being the Antigonish Heritage Museum. My parents were originally from Palestine. They came here about thirty years ago. I was born in Antigonish. I’ve never really felt alone, as in not having any real connections or anything, but [it’s] the culture part of it, the constant, always feeling that I’m different.”

Fatima El Kurdi is 18 yrs. old and lives in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

Living in Canada



“I feel like I don’t have a culture.”

Chandra Hunter is 19 yrs. old and lives in Whitby, Ontario.



“This year we’ve had a lot of awareness that there’s not all only just one faction that makes up Canada. There’s all different sorts of people that come to Canada to make up who we are.”

Glen Simon is 20 yrs. old and lives in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.



“It’s not just talking to others, but meeting lots of people from all over Canada. And, coming together, we form a kind of family. Together, we’re strong. You get the feeling that you can have more power with everyone together than you can have by yourself alone.”

Geneviève Lavallée is 18 yrs. old and lives in Laval, Québec.

Power: taking action



Individual racism

“Right off the bat, someone who is of a different colour is going to be seen differently from the others. People look at me and see that I am an Arab and to them an Arab is no good. It was harder to make friends because I was different from the others.... It’s more of an interior kind of violence. When you’re all alone, you ask yourself why. I mean, especially when you’re little you can’t really understand it. So you try to think of all the reasons, logical or illogical. In the end, the reason is very simple. People are afraid. It’s really as simple as that.”

Ahmed Muktari is 17 yrs. old and lives in Laval, Québec.

Systemic Racism

“The whole idea of power came up and how youth have very little power and have always been given very little power. And then you see 200 people come together and they’re there for the same reason. You realize that you have a lot of power. Power is in your numbers.”

Fatima El Kurdi is 18 yrs. old and lives in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

“The six days of The Students Commission conference have taught us to leave behind those who do not believe in the power of youth, and to join forces with those who care and are willing to make changes. We have learned to celebrate those with a dream. We will be the agents of change.”

1994 Students Commission Report





Does your School Board's policy contain the following?

- A policy statement that recognizes the importance of, and has a mandate for, fighting racism. It should also outline the rights and responsibilities of all staff and students.
- A mandate to promote a positive and respectful environment.
- The definition of a racist incident.
- Procedural guidelines for handling racist and ethnic incidents involving students and staff.
- Discipline procedures that are clearly outlined or authority for schools to do so.
- Ways to ensure that there is a process where students feel safe in reporting incidents of harassments and racism.

Source: *TVO Anti-Racism Education* • Selected Readings and Resources, pg. 67-69, TVONTARIO, P.O. Box 200 Station Q, Toronto, Ontario, M4T 2T1

If you feel your Board's policy is inadequate or if you don't have one:

- Present your concerns to your trustees, to pressure them to begin a process for policy development.
- Establish community partnerships.
- Establish an advisory committee composed of trustees, Board administrators, community groups and students.
- Raise awareness and identify issues of anti-racism and ethnocultural equity that need to be addressed.
- Review core objectives and develop an action plan.
- Define expected outcomes.
- Establish timelines to ensure that the objectives and outcomes are achieved.
- Allocate responsibility for implementation.
- Allocate resources.
- Develop a communication plan and a monitoring process.
- Lobby your School Board to develop a structure where students can participate (ie. student senate), to express their views on matters pertaining to their education.

Resources: *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*, 1993, pg. 7, Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Mowat Block, Queens Park, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1L2, (416) 325-2600 ISBN 0-7729-8337-2



- The Canadian Council of Multicultural and Intercultural Educators Association
204-316 Dalhousie St.
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 7E7
(613) 241-4499
They will direct you to other resources.
- Racism and Education: Different People's Perspectives and Experiences
Canadian Teachers' Federation
110 Argyle Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 1B4
ISBN 088989 261 X
- Ottawa-Carleton Teachers' Workbook on Ethnocultural and Race Relations
Rose Liang
185 Holmwood Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario
K1S 2P3
E. Louise Yazdani
523 Gascon
Russel, Ontario
K4R 1C6
- Winning Ideas (Together We're Better Contest)
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The National Capital Commission presents The Students Commission

Video Two:

Nobody's Born a Racist: Student Perspectives on Racism

Video Three:

The Students Commission 1993 Promotional Video

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LA JEUNESSE PARLE YOUTH SPEAKS

THE STUDENTS COMMISSION?!

- * You get to discuss issues that are important to youth, in an atmosphere where everyone's opinion counts and is respected.
- * You get to meet awesome people from all across Canada (from the Northwest Territories to PEI), and from all different races, religions, backgrounds, income and education levels.
- * You get to eat cookies and milk at the Governor-General's house!
- * You get to experience Ottawa, the Nation's Capital and visit all the cool tourist places like Parliament Hill, the Market and the Museum of Civilization.
- * You get to speak your mind and stand up for what you believe in!
- * You'll meet friends that will last a lifetime!
- * You'll have tons of fun!

Technically, The Students Commission is a non-profit organization that organizes a national Youth Conference every year, but it's also a lot more than that. The 6-day conference that is held in Ottawa every year is organized by youth, for youth. Yeah, we have a few adults hangin' around to make sure we're on track and to help us pay the bills, but it's the students who run the show. That's the whole point of The Students Commission -- to give youth a voice and to show them that they CAN make a difference in this country.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to tell you everything that will happen at The Students Commission, and it's impossible for you to understand how amazing it feels when 200 diverse youth from across the country become united -- unless of course, you've actually been to the conference. This is an invitation for an adventure with 200 other youth, aged 14 - 19.



So what are you waiting for? Apply now!

STUDENTS COMMISSION APPLICATION FORM

APPLY NOW for The Students Commission Conference to be held mid-August in Ottawa. Students will be expected to help raise the costs of attending, but we will assist you with a sponsorship package. The Students Commission program was developed by TG Magazine, the National Capital Commission, and Canadian Optimist Clubs.

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Last Name

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City

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Province/Territory

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Postal Code

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Home Phone ()

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Birth date

.....
Year of High School

.....
Languages spoken fluently

English French Other

Please tell us a little about yourself and send a school photo if you have one. Send to TG Magazine, 70 University Ave., Suite 1050, Toronto, Ontario, M5J 2M4. (416) 597-8297 Fax: (416) 597-0661.

If you want The Students Commission video and guide for your school it's available for \$35.





**ARTWORK BY EILEEN COYLE
FROM WINNING IDEAS TO STOP RACISM**