



# Different colours One team

**Speak up, stand proud, stop racism**



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*See resources on reverse*

# Classroom strategies and resources for antiracism education

## What is racism?

**Racism** happens when a person or group of people are mistreated, discriminated against, or believed to be lesser-than based on their race, or perceived race/ethnicity. It can happen through individual interactions and prejudice, but also manifests in systems, policies, and cultural norms.

While we often think that racism exists as explicit acts of hatred from a belief that one racial or ethnic group is inferior to another, it can also happen unconsciously in biases that we may unknowingly have.

Racism is different from **racial prejudice**. Racism is present when there is mistreatment or discrimination against a person or group with less power. Racial prejudice is a term used to describe situations in which an individual or group with less power demonstrates prejudice towards those with more power. While worthy of attention and discussion, it is important to recognize that racial prejudice does not have the far-reaching harm and effects of racism, as it does not carry the same history of exclusion and maltreatment.

Another component of racism to discuss in our schools is **racial privilege**, which exists when a person or a group of people is awarded unearned advantages because of their race or ethnic identity.

## How does racism impact students, families, teachers, and communities?

Some may not see that racism is prevalent in our society, but rather an issue that dominates only Canadian history. Unfortunately, both systemic and individual acts of racism continue to significantly affect BC students, families, teachers, and communities. First Nations people in Canada have higher rates of poverty than the national average, as well as lower high school graduation rates, higher populations in the prison system, higher rates for suicide and mental health issues, and higher reported incidents of racial profiling by police. Statistics such as these are applicable to many racialized communities all over North America.

Various movements for racial justice have drawn attention to these issues, and as teachers we need to recognize how this affects our students and their families. The Black Lives movement has brought attention to increased experiences with authorities; labour justice advocates have drawn attention to the unstable situations of insecure work and dangerous working conditions; and migrant justice allies have been consistently highlighting the fear faced by those with precarious status when accessing public services such as transit, healthcare, and—yes—our schools!

We hear about racism occurring in BC youth sports and athletics, places of worship that our students attend, bullying at lunchtime, and online harassment and cyber-bullying that is on the rise. Despite the best efforts of teachers and students to address ethnic and racial discrimination, racism still exists today and will continue to do so if we do not effectively implement antiracist education.

## What can you do about racism in your country and in your communities?

If you identify racism or racist attitudes in your school or community, it is crucial that you address it and speak up. We must actively engage individuals, the community, and people in power in order to make our schools more equitable.

Talk with your school administration or school board. Connect with likeminded people to show that there are many people in your community who are committed to addressing racism in your schools.

## Primary grades

1. Read *The Skin I'm In* by Pat Thomas. Ask students how they are different and how they are the same (e.g., appearance, beliefs, lifestyles, culture, etc.). Younger students may draw pictures on chart paper while older students may write descriptive words. Students may then partner up to find one commonality and one unique characteristic that they share among themselves. Have pairs join another pair to take the discussion even further. Each group of four can then share their ideas with the rest of the class.

2. Show the YouTube clip from Sesame Street, *It's Not Easy Being Green*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpiIWMWWVco&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpiIWMWWVco&feature=related).

Ask students the following questions:

- a) Why would Kermit the Frog say, "It's not easy being green?"
- b) How do you think Kermit feels?
- c) Have you ever felt like you don't fit in because of who you are?
- d) What would you do to help make Kermit feel better?

Have students share some ideas in order to write a new song, "It's Easy Being..." Teachers can then focus on the commonalities and unique qualities among students. This is most suitable for younger primary students or as a joint activity with an older buddy class.

## Intermediate grades

1. Have students brainstorm slogans that they would define as **antiracist** or that encourage action against racism. Individually or in small groups, have students create a poster with words and/or images (either as a collage or electronically) that relate to their slogan. After creating a poster gallery, invite other classes to come and view them. Have students explain to their peers about the images and key messages they wish to send.
2. Invite students to bring in magazines and cut out images that represent what *society* believes to be beautiful or successful. Has everyone chosen similar images? Why or why not? Is this an accurate depiction of our society? Why or why not?

Follow up by having students create a new collage or add to their old collage with what they have learned from their conversation. This activity can introduce the idea of **cultural racism**, a term which refers to mainstream beliefs that teach that one cultural group is dominant over another cultural group (i.e., someone's image of what a beautiful, honest person looks like).

3. Read *Shabash!* by Ann Walsh, a story about a young boy who is the first Sikh to make the hockey team in his community. Follow up with a discussion of exclusion in athletics. You can reference real life stories such as the one in which a 17-year-old soccer player for the Calgary Northwest United Inter was told by a referee either to take off his patka or leave the field while playing in a tournament in Langley in 2005. Other stories include ones in which young girls wearing head scarves in Ontario and Quebec have had trouble joining sports teams, competing, and pursuing their passions. Ask students what they would do in order to address such acts of racism, or have them engage in a letter-writing campaign or other advocacy initiative.

## Secondary grades

1. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvqXh83IJgM&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvqXh83IJgM&feature=plcp) (PowerPoint)  
Useful information for classroom teachers who want students to learn about the history of racism in Canada against a variety of Canadian citizens.
2. [bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/Antiracism/RacismInCanadaSec.pdf](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/Antiracism/RacismInCanadaSec.pdf) (lesson plans)

## Recommended books for classroom use

*The Skin You Live In* by Michael Tyler. Chicago Children's Museum, 2005. This book talks about how important it is to love and be proud of the skin you are in, no matter the colour or shade. No colour is better than another. (Themes: self-acceptance and accepting differences)

*Skin Again* by Bell Hooks. Hyperion Books for Children, 2004. The skin I'm in is only part of my identity; if you want to know the real me you have to get to know me. We have many similarities when it comes to who we are on the inside. (Themes: ethnic diversity, similarities, accepting differences, and self-acceptance)

*The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi. Dell Dragonfly Books, 2001. This is the story of a young Korean girl, Unhei, who moves to a new country and new school. She is anxious about making friends and so decides to change her name so that is easier to pronounce. At the end of the story, she realizes the importance of her given name and takes to teaching her class about it rather than changing it. (Themes: friendship and accepting differences)

*Eggbert: The Slightly Cracked Egg* by Tom Ross. PaperStar Books, 1997. This is the story of Eggbert who is forced to leave the fridge when the other eggs discover he is cracked. Eggbert tries to change himself to fit in but discovers that being different is something to be proud of. (Themes: self-esteem, being different, and discrimination)

*The Whisperer* by Nick Butterworth. HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2004. Two gangs of cats, one ginger and the other black and white, are always fighting. One day a young ginger cat and a black and white cat fall in love. They are told that if they do not stop seeing each other, they will not be allowed to live with their families and will have to leave. They decide to leave, but later return with babies, one of which, Tiger, is ginger with black stripes. Tiger, being a mix of both gangs of cats, prompts both families to reconsider their former attitudes towards the other gang. (Themes: accepting differences, friendship, emotion, and solving problems)

*Hank Aaron: Brave in Every Way* by Peter Golenbock. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2005. Hank Aaron was determined to play baseball before black players were allowed to play in the major leagues. On April 8, 1974, Hank hit home run number 715, surpassing Babe Ruth's legendary baseball record! His success on the field led to hate mail and public outrage, but he continued to play amidst the hatred. This is the story of Hank Aaron's strength and perseverance.

## BCTF workshops

1. Antidiscrimination Response Training (*previously Responding to Racism through ART and Ally-building*) (3 hours) This skills-based workshop is a powerful, practical way to promote awareness and empathy, and to develop the skills to effectively respond to discriminatory remarks and incidents of racism, sexism, and homophobia in the classroom and the workplace.
2. Incorporating Antiracist Education into BC's New Curriculum (*previously Socializing Justice: Taking Action Against Racism*) (3 hours to full day) This workshop looks at privilege in society and how the legacy of our colonial past has shaped our present. It provides youth perspectives on racism in schools, and explores strategies to recognize and eliminate racism in society, classrooms, schools, and communities.

## Public service announcements about racism

(suitable for Grades 5 to 7 and developed by students for students)

2009 winner: *Diversity is a gift*, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=INqSza0IQSM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INqSza0IQSM)  
This PSA celebrates and values the notion of diversity and sends the important message that we must "Celebrate our differences!"

2009 winner: *Multiple Choice*, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-vogoCjhQ8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-vogoCjhQ8)  
This PSA emphasizes the importance of empowering students to be active witnesses during a discriminatory incident rather than merely being a bystander. It also supports the school-wide program, Break the Silence: The power of active witnessing.

2008 winner: *I Remember*, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVhqsGWIOdk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVhqsGWIOdk)  
This PSA was inspired by a discussion regarding numerous pieces of legislation that institutionalized racism and discrimination in BC and Canada.

2007 winner: *That Joke*, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAYMeNNuzto&gl=CA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAYMeNNuzto&gl=CA)  
This PSA was inspired by the question: are racial jokes harmful and hurtful, or relatively harmless because they are understood as "just jokes?" Several brave students shared their experience of being hurt by, or feeling uncomfortable with, such jokes, even if they themselves were not the targets.