

TALKING TO OUR CHILDREN ABOUT RACISM

What is Racism?

There is a belief that Asian Canadians have "made it" in society and that they do not experience racism in Canada. This is not true. Racism can occur and affect others in many different ways.

Racism is the belief that one racial group is better than another. Racism has the power to create and enforce unjust policies, practices, and beliefs.

Overt racism done in public spaces is fairly easy to identify. However, we should also beware of more subtle acts of racism, like microaggressions and stereotypes.

Microaggressions are everyday actions or words that subtly discriminate against a minority group. Microaggressions can be hard to notice or call out. When considering microaggressions, context is extremely important.

Where are you *really* from?

Wow, your English is so good!

Saying gibberish and asking "is that your language?"

What is your Asian name?

Stereotypes are exaggerated or false ideas about an entire minority group. While some stereotypes seem positive, they are still hurtful and continue the idea that all Asian communities are the same.

Asians are bad drivers

All Asians look alike

"Tiger mom" aka strict parenting

All Asians are good at math



Did you know...

Children begin to understand racial differences as early as 6 months old (Winkler, 2009)

Canada's History of Anti-Asian Racism

19th Century Chinese Labour Exploitation

Chinese migrants are paid unlivable wages while building the Canadian Pacific Railway. They experience extremely unsafe work conditions, resulting in over 600 Chinese workers dying.

1872 Chinese Disenfranchisement

B.C. denies Chinese Canadians and Indigenous Peoples the right to vote. Without the provincial vote, they cannot vote in federal elections.

1885 Chinese Head Tax

Chinese Canadians are forced to pay a fee to enter Canada. Chinese women and children are excluded from this, separating families.

1877-1929 Limit on Japanese Immigrants

Waves of Japanese immigrants arrive in Canada, angering the public. In 1908, Canada declares that no more than 400 Japanese men can enter Canada yearly, which is later reduced to 150.

1920 Dominion Elections Act

This solidified the right of provinces to restrict federal voting rights to citizens.

1907 Provincial Elections Act Amendment Act

Indo Canadians are also added to the list of Canadians denied the right to vote.

1907 Anti-Asian Riots

Thousands gather in Vancouver to protest against Asian immigration. Protestors storm Chinatown, damaging Chinese-owned businesses and homes, later moving to Japanese neighbourhoods.

1902 Royal Commission

The federal government appoints a Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration, determining that Asian Canadians are "unfit for full citizenship" and "dangerous to the state".

1895 Provincial Elections Act Amendment

British Columbia adds Japanese Canadians to the list of those denied the right to vote.

1923-1947 Chinese Exclusion Act

Canada bans all Chinese immigrants from entering Canada, virtually ending Chinese immigration.

1942 Japanese Internment Camps

In response to Pearl Harbor, Japanese Canadians are detained, incarcerated, and exiled for the rest of WW2. The government sells all Japanese Canadian owned property.

1947 Repealed Dominion Elections Act

The Dominion Elections Act is repealed for all Asians except Japanese Canadians.

1949 Repealed Dominion Elections Act & War Measures Act

Japanese Canadians are finally granted the right to vote and move freely in Canada.

1973 Filipino Labour Exploitation

The Temporary Employment Authorization program issues temporary visas for care workers, particularly Filipina caregivers. Countless Filipinas report workplace abuse, eventually leading to the institutionalization of the Foreign Domestic Workers Movement in 1981.

2010 "Too Asian"

Macleans publishes a racist article discussing the "overrepresentation" of Asians at Canadian Universities and its effect on White student's post-secondary choices.

2001 High Reports of Vietnamese Discrimination

A study by Stats Canada finds that 1 in 3 Vietnamese Canadians have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment based on their ethnicity, race, religion, language or accent.

1979 "Campus Giveaway"

W5 airs an episode called "Campus Giveaway", sharing false and racist information about Chinese foreign students depriving educational opportunities to Canadians.

1975 "Boat People"

Canada accepts over 200,000 Indochinese political refugees from 1975 throughout the 1980's. The term "Boat People" is now regarded as derogatory, representing dehumanizing language often used in connection to refugees.

2019 Bill 21

Quebec bans those working in public sectors from wearing religious symbols such as crosses, hijabs, turbans and yarmulkes while they are on duty.

2020 Korean Consulate in Montreal Issues Warning

A 44-year-old Korean man is stabbed in Montreal, highlighting a rise in anti-Asian racism sparked by Coronavirus. The Korean Consulate in Montreal warns Koreans to be careful and vigilant during these difficult times.

2020 Rising Anti-Asian Racism

Anti-Asian hate incidents increase 717% compared to 2019 in Vancouver.

Why Should We Talk About Racism With Our Children?



Children & Race

1 in 4 young Canadians are a member of a visible minority group and half of all racialized students have experienced racism at school - usually through racial stereotypes, social exclusion or hostile words and behaviours (Ngo, 2020).



COVID-19 & Race

Chinese (25%), Korean (26%) and Filipinos (22%) were among the highest groups to report attacks on the basis of race, ethnicity, or skin colour since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Vancouver police reported a 717% increase in Anti-Asian hate incidents compared to 2019. These are only reported attacks, there are countless more that go unreported (Vancouver Police Board, 2021).



Parents & Race

In a survey of over 500 Chinese Canadians across Canada, over half of respondents reported fearing that their children would be bullied upon returning to school (Angus Reid Report, 2020).

Compared to other ethnic groups, Asian families are least likely to foster conversations about race and discrimination with their children (Hughes et al., 2006).

"Before the pandemic, Asian identity was invisible. Now, it's hyper-visible. The incidents I hear about in counselling are microaggressions, but they can really affect youths' self esteem and confidence as they grow up." - Kennes Lin (Youth Counsellor)

Racism & Mental Health

Racism and experiences of racial discrimination are known contributors to poor mental health. (Cheah et al., 2020).

East Asian students have reported disproportionately high levels of low self esteem, low self confidence, and low self worth. (Toronto District School Board, 2015)

A recent Canadian study found that East Asian Canadians are experiencing disproportionately high rates of poor mental health due to an increase in anti-Asian racism from the COVID-19 pandemic. (Wu et al., 2020).

Racism can lead to low self esteem, a sense of loss, a sense of failure, helplessness, and more... all of which can lead to depression, self-harm, and self loathing. (Fernando, 1984).

A 2020 report has revealed that due to the pandemic, a spike in mental health concerns for young children has emerged. 57% of participants aged 15 to 17 expressed that their mental health is "somewhat worse" or "much worse" than it was before the pandemic. (Raising Canada, 2020).

Warning signs of mental health concerns among children may include:



- Persistent sadness lasting two or more weeks
- Withdrawing from or avoiding social interaction
- Outbursts or extreme irritability
- Sudden mood, behaviour or personality changes
- Difficulty sleeping, frequent headaches or stomach aches
- Frequently avoiding or missing school
- Increased risk taking behaviour
- Decreased interest in activities that they used to enjoy

Talking About Racism is Challenging, but Necessary



Become comfortable with being uncomfortable

Talking about racism can be difficult, but this does not mean we should avoid the topic altogether. With practice, we can become comfortable talking about racism. Once we are comfortable talking about racism, we will be better equipped to identify and stand up to racism.



Encourage your child and show patience

Everyone's anti-racist journey has to start somewhere - it's never too late and it's never too early. Allow your child to ask questions and answer them thoughtfully. Encourage your child to speak openly about their daily school life, social justice, racism and other issues.



Be open and honest about what you don't know

This shows that you are human too. We want to ensure that we are giving our child accurate information, so saying "I don't know" is a perfectly acceptable answer. Take the opportunity to learn and grow together.

Ways to Get the Conversation Started

Create opportunities to talk when you are with your family. Choose a time that feels comfortable like car rides, over meals, during family activities or when talks about race comes up in the news.

What is your favourite thing about your Asian heritage?

Do you know any Asian Canadian history?

How would you respond if you experienced racism?

Have you ever wished that you weren't Asian?

Have other kids made comments about you being Asian?

How do you feel about going back to school?

Don't be afraid to share your own stories. Hearing about your experience can help your child understand their own.

If Your Child is a Victim of Race-Based Bullying

Calling your child's school to talk to their teacher, principal or superintendent is a great first step to addressing race-based bullying.

#ACT2endracism



You are not alone, report racism.

Text hi to our virtual helper, Mei, at 1-587-507-3838 to report a racist incident or if you are a witness. Available in multiple languages.

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Incidents can be reported in English, French, simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino.

Whenever you need to talk, we're open.

Text 686868
KidsHelpPhone.ca
Call 1-800-668-6868



You can contact Kids Help Phone. They offer free, 24/7 support for people in crisis in English and French

You can also contact the Crisis Text Line. They offer free, 24/7 support with a trained crisis counsellor

CRISIS TEXT LINE |

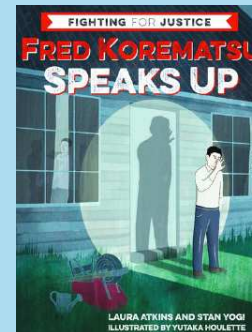
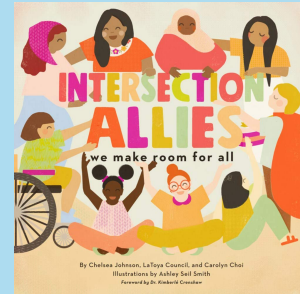
Text HELLO to 741741

Free, 24/7, Confidential

Additional Resources

Elementary

A Map into the World by Kao Kalia Yang
The Rabbit Listened by Cori Doerrfeld
Intersection Allies: We Make Room for All by Latoya Council, Carolyn Choi & Chelsea Johnson
Young, Proud, and Sung-Jee by Joyce Y Lee
The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi
Maggie's Chopsticks by Alan Woo
I'm New Here by Anne Sibley
Teach Us Your Name by Huda Essa
Eyes that Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho

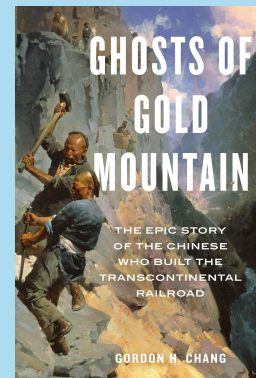


Junior High

Dragon Pearl by Yoon Ha Lee
Lalani of the Distant Sea by Erin Entrada Kelly
American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang
They Called Us Enemy by George Takei
Sylvia and Aki by Winifred Conkling
Fred Korematsu Speaks Up by Laura Atkins, Stan Yogi & Yutaka Houlette

High School

This Book is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action, and Do the Work by Tiffany Jewell
Obasan by Joy Kogawa
Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad by Gordon H. Chang



"Books help kids to explore the world. They are the real ambassadors." - Gene Luen Yang

For more information go to:
www.act2endracism.ca

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Funded by the Government of Canada
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"Something is changing in this generation of Asian Americans. We are tired of being told that we don't experience racism, we are tired of being told to keep our heads down and not make trouble."

-Jeremy Lin, NBA

Citations

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