

A Closer Look; Understanding the systemic racism of Canadian history and current policies.

Notes for the facilitator:

It is strongly advised that this workshop be presented in its entirety, and that the activities be presented in the order in which they are outlined below, in order to facilitate an effective learning process.

Acknowledge with the group that these are hard subjects to talk about, that we all have different experiences with these issues, and that this is a learning experience for both you as a facilitator, and they as students.

If there is a certain part of the workshop you feel uncomfortable facilitating either do not include it, get the skills or information you need to facilitate it comfortably, or acknowledge your discomfort with the group as a way to relate that we are all learning and working towards becoming more comfortable with these issues.

When facilitating the "Guided discussion" segments of the workshop, be flexible with the use of the questions and "key points" which are suggested - feel free to expand upon, alter, or shorten the discussions depending on the dynamic of the group and what feels best for you.

Pre-workshop set-up:

Arrange chairs in a circle

Have a chalk board or flip board available

Have a TV, VCR, and the "Expressions of Aboriginal Youth" Peer Perspectives video

Supply pencils and small pieces of paper for each student

Download the "Chinese Canadian history" and "Native Canadian history" documents to use as reference material.

Download the "Historical Timeline" document from the website, and cut out the events (without the dates attached) so that they can be handed to the students as part of the "pin the event on the timeline" activity.

Download the "Immigration to Canada" and "Immigration scenarios" documents. Cut out the scenarios from the "Immigration scenarios" so that they can be handed out to the class. You may wish to research and create more scenarios.

Workshop Timeline:

5 min	Introduction
10 min	Iceberg
5 min	Child's Eye
15 min	Pin the Event on the Timeline
10 min	"Stop the Damage" Video Clip
10 min	Guided Discussion
15 min	Where do we stand
5 min	Closing



Introduction:

Objective: To set the tone for a down-to-earth workshop about real issues that affect the participants.

Introduce the objective of the workshop: to learn more about the parts of Canada's history that are withheld from our mainstream society, so that we can begin to understand the experiences of people of colour within our communities.

Introduce yourself as a facilitator. Keep it short and personalize it - share a bit of yourself and what experiences you have had that make you interested in doing this work.

Iceberg:

Objective: To create an environment where everyone is sharing a part of who they are and how they identify in the world, and collectively acknowledges that we all have important aspects of ourselves that are not seen from the surface.

Activity:

Have each person write down the five things that best describe who they are (example: female, creative, intelligent, brown, independent).

Draw an iceberg on the board, with a water line so that half the iceberg is beneath the surface of the water and half is above.

Do a round: have each person share his or her five aspects of self (each person has the right to choose to pass). Write these on top of the iceberg picture - the things that would be obvious to a stranger are written above the water line, and the things that would not be apparent to a stranger are written below the water line. Example: female and black would most likely go above the water line, and creative, intelligent, and independent would go below the line. Some things may be both above and below, or written on the water line.

These aspects of ourselves which are visible to the outside eye are attached to a greater social meaning (gender, colour, ability), and often these are stereotyped.

Ask the group if they can define the word "stereotype", then define it with them: "a stereotype is a false or generalized conception of a group of people, which results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences" [option: brainstorm groups of people who are stereotyped with the group]. Explain that stereotypes create prejudice. Define "prejudice" as "an attitude based on stereotypes". Next, ask the group what "discrimination" means, and then define it as "discrimination is prejudice put into practice. It is the unequal or unjust treatment of individuals or groups through the denial of civil liberties and/or everyday opportunities".



Child's Eye

Objective: To understand how certain social systems shape our perspective (how what we see is interpreted through cultural references which we are taught), and perpetuate discrimination.

Activity:

Draw a picture of an eye on the board - introduce this eye to the group as "a child's eye".

The child's eye is innocent to these social meanings - we learn them as we grow up. What will influence/shape how this child sees the world?

Write the students' suggestions over the top of the eye.

School will most likely come up as an influencing factor. If it does not, add it to the list. Explain: school is often where we learn about history, and this history shapes how we "see" other cultural groups. So we're going to learn some history we don't always have access to in school.

Pin The Event On The Timeline

Objective: To have fun, and learn about the systemic racism of Canada towards Asian, South Asian, and Native peoples over the last few hundred years.

Activity:

Put the group into pairs, and hand out the events from the "Historical Timeline" document (without the dates attached) to the group, along with a piece of tape. Depending on numbers, there should be at least one event per pair of students.

Refer to the "Chinese Canadian history" and "Native Canadian history" documents to further explain historic events that students do not understand.

Have the dates from the "Historical Timeline" document written as a timeline on the board (or long piece of paper taped to the wall).

Instruct the students to decide with their partners which date on the timeline they think goes with the historic event they've been given. Then they should place their event on the timeline.

Once the group has placed their events on the timeline, read out the "Historical Timeline" document and change the timeline created by the students so that the historic events and dates align correctly.

Ask the students what they think of the timeline, once it has been corrected.

"Stop The Damage"; Expressions of Aboriginal Youth Video Viewing

Objective: To bring the historical information into the context of personal experience. To deepen awareness of native colonial experience by viewing media created by native youth.

Activity:

View "Stop the Damage" video clip

After viewing, do a round where every student shares their thoughts on the video, even if it's just one word (they can also choose to pass).



Guided Discussion; Immigration and "opportunity"

Objective: To gain awareness about the classist, racist, and sexist discrimination of Canada's current immigration policy.

Activity:

Split the group into small groups and hand each new group a scenario from the "Immigration scenarios" document, or have more immigration scenarios created so that each student can receive one.

Have the "Immigration to Canada" document taped to the board

Have each group/student calculate the immigration points for the individual in their scenario to see if they pass.

Once the calculations have been made have a discussion with the group about how the point system limits those who don't have access to education because of economic class and/or gender, who don't have enough money because of their economic class and/or their country's low economy (low \$ exchange rate), who are too old or too young, who don't speak English or French, etc and how this means that most immigrants from developing countries who are able to immigrate have high education and yet once they get here they often have to work low paying jobs because their education is not recognized/ because of systemic and/or individual racism

Where Do We Stand

Objective: To provide students with the opportunity to integrate the information learned throughout the workshop in a discussion where they must express their own opinions and discuss the concept of Canada as a place of equality for all.

Activity: (this activity is also described in the Peer Perspectives Racism 4 Reel, and OutLet resource packages).

Have the students stand, and clear lots of space within the room.

Next, explain that there is an imaginary continuum along the floor. One end of the continuum is "absolutely do not agree", the other is "absolutely agree", and the middle is "neutral". Also explain that you will read a series of statements, and once the statement is read, the students move themselves to the place on the continuum which best reflects their belief in the statement.

Statements (these can be read out in any order):

Canada is a place of equal opportunity for all

Canada's culture is based on a wide variety of religions, languages, and customs [it is important to stress that this statement refers to what Canada's culture is "based on"]

First Nations history is well represented in our school textbooks.

Young new immigrants wouldn't be teased in school if they learned Canadian customs

It would be easier for an immigrant from England to be financially and socially successful in Canada, then for an immigrant from Iraq ["Iraq" is just an example; you may replace this country with any other developing country]



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Eye to eye; closing

Objective: To create a sense of community through shared experience. To calm any tensions that may have surfaced in the last activity by a reminder of our shared humanity, and to remember that there is more to a person than what is on the surface (reference the iceberg).

Activity:

Separate the group in two. Have one group create an inner circle, and have the other create an outer circle around the first group. Those in the inner circle face outwards, and those in the outer circle face inwards so that each person is across from someone else.

Ask for silence

Encourage them to hold eye contact.

As they stand say: "the person you are looking at has felt excluded...this person has felt included...this person has felt pride...this person has felt guilt...this person has felt insecure...this person has felt confident...this person has loved...this person wants to be loved."

More resources for change at <http://www.accesstomedia.org/change> .
For more information about the Access to Media Education Society, visit <http://www.accesstomedia.org> or contact us at ames@gulfislands.com

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