



Your Stories: Anti-Racism

A Journey Towards an Anti-Racism and Intercultural Competency Framework

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At Watson Road Elementary School, where learning happens on the traditional unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) People, we have been building a culture where Anti-Racism and Intercultural Competency is a key learning priority and core principle of how we see ourselves as a school community.

We are in the fifth year of our journey of learning, acting, and building capacity so that our staff, students, and parents have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to respond to incidents where racism, prejudice, and/or discrimination are at the core. In this follow-up to my November 2023 *Principl(ed)* article, I share some of the actions we have undertaken that can be woven into the work of other BC schools as they journey towards being anti-racist learning communities.

EQUITY TEAM

We have a team of lead learners who gather regularly to participate in learning activities and discuss the direction of our anti-racism work.

BOOK STUDIES

Our staff participates in voluntary book studies each year. Our last book was *The Anti-Racist Kid* by Tiffany Jewell and Nicole Miles, and in spring 2026 we will study *Teaching with Equity – Strategies and Resources for Building a Culturally Responsive Classroom* by Aja Hannah. We have also done several book studies to establish core learning around inclusion and trauma-informed practice.

CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS

All classrooms have had presentations on equity, Reconciliation, the history of racism, what racism looks like, examples of micro-aggressions, and how to be an ally.

ASSEMBLY SERIES

Primary and Intermediate students participated in an assembly series where they learned about belonging, diversity, inclusion, racism, and intercultural competency.

ELL CELEBRATION

Our ELL (English Language Learning) teacher welcomed our ELL families to an event where their children showcased their learning about Canada and Canadian culture, and highlighted how their own cultural backgrounds contribute to our learning community.

BULLETIN BOARDS

Our ELL teacher, Indigenous Student Advocate, and classroom teachers highlight our cultural diversity through monthly bulletin boards. Students throughout the school love learning more about their classmates through these culturally rich visual displays.

STAFF MEETINGS

Our staff learning is continually revisited during staff meetings.

IMPLEMENTATION DAY LEARNING

We have dedicated staff development days that focus on trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, and anti-racism training.

RECONCILIATION AND ORANGE SHIRT DAY PROJECTS

Teacher leaders and our Indigenous Student Advocate lead school-wide activities to honour Truth and Reconciliation throughout the school year. ReconciliACTION is embedded in our school's culture.

GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Our staff is grounded through provincial documents – Anti-Racism: A Guide for Teachers; Racial Equity Together - K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan; and, Racism Response Guidelines – and through our local Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation Agreement with local Indigenous partners. Author and educator Jo Chrona's graphic, "Becoming Anti-Racist in Canada" is an image that we revisit frequently to reflect on our own journey.

STUDENT LEADERS

Some of our IBPOC student leaders lead during our assembly series, and present to our primary classrooms about belonging, fairness, and anti-racism. Administration also meets each term with Student Advisory Reps (STARS) to get insights into the student experience at our school. We ensure that our IBPOC students have a voice in each STARS conversation.

STUDENT LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Students at all grade levels have delivered personalized land acknowledgements during our morning announcements. Daily land acknowledgements are part of our morning greeting to students, staff, and guests.

CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Classroom teachers invite their students' families to share their culture with the class.

EQUITY AUDITS

Staff teams completed a walk-through of our school using an Equity Audit tool to find any gaps in how we deliver the most culturally safe learning environment possible.

CODE OF CONDUCT LANGUAGE

This has been embedded to support the response to incidents of racism, prejudice, and discrimination.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

In addition to hosting a parent roundtable, we have invited our PAC to participate in staff anti-racism and DEI training. We also engage our parent community through monthly newsletters where topics related to cultural safety and anti-racism are highlighted.



A key factor in the learning is teaching students and staff about the “why”, and the “*why it is important*”.

Our school community has learned that it is not enough to just have events, but to understand the impetus for the events. When we talk about Orange Shirt Day, our students know that Orange Shirt Day is a recognition of the systemic racism of residential schools and Indigenous-specific racism in our society. When we talk about Black History Month, we don’t limit the conversation to one month, but instead talk all year about why Black History Month is honoured.

Walking an anti-racism journey is just that – a journey. We have the privilege of having a committed staff who believe in this important work, and who are committed to the self-reflection required to look through another lens. When we reflect on this work as a journey, we don’t work towards an end date. Rather, we experience a continual arc of learning and action.

*DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN STORY TO TELL ABOUT
ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVES IN YOUR SCHOOL?*

*HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT EVERYONE IN YOUR
LEARNING COMMUNITY FEELS A SENSE OF BELONGING?*

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU:

REACH OUT TO SANDRA@BCPVPA.BC.CA

