

This poster is a part of a series to help students learn about racism in Canada and how to fight it in their communities! This learning series has 6 posters and 6 videos. If you can, try to start from the beginning and check them out in order! This poster is the fourth of the series.

Racism Toward Indigenous Communities in Canada

Indigenous peoples are the original inhabitants of the land that we now call Canada. You may have listened to a land acknowledgement at school or in the community. It is meant to recognize the land that we live on and show respect for the original inhabitants. Your school may have also honoured National Indigenous History Month during the month of June.



Although there is a lot to celebrate about Indigenous communities, they continue to experience racism every day. You may have heard about the Idle No More movement in the news. It was started due to the long history of racism toward Indigenous people that is still happening today. How did this come to be?



Reserves: Before the 1500s, Indigenous peoples were the only inhabitants of the land. Then the Europeans arrived in North America and took over the land by force. As the Europeans built more cities, Indigenous peoples were moved farther away and forced under laws to change their ways of living. This was called assimilation. During the 1800s, the Canadian government created a law called the Indian Act that forced Indigenous peoples to live in places with poor living conditions. These were called reserves, and today there are over 3,100 reserves in Canada.



Residential Schools: Indigenous children were removed or stolen from their homes and taken to residential schools. These schools were run by religious groups who forced Indigenous peoples to think and behave more like Europeans. Indigenous children were punished for speaking their language and practicing their culture. Many of them were abused by the people in charge. The last residential school closed in 1996.



Sixties Scoop: During the 1960s, the Canadian government continued to assimilate Indigenous peoples by removing Indigenous children from their homes and placing them in foster care to be adopted by non-Indigenous families. This was called the Sixties Scoop. Indigenous children experienced loss of culture, loneliness and abuse at their new homes. This foster care system still continues today, and now more than half of the children currently in foster care are Indigenous.

These violent acts are forms of colonization, which is a process used to control a group of people and hurt them. Compared to other groups of people in Canada, Indigenous peoples experience higher levels of poverty, racism and suicide rates. While there have been efforts to rebuild Indigenous communities, we need to start thinking of ways we can help, especially if we are immigrants.

Since Indigenous peoples are the First Peoples of the land, everyone else who has come to live in Canada is an immigrant or settler. As settlers, it is important for us to carefully think about a few things:

- Settlers (or immigrants) are living on land that has been taken away from Indigenous peoples. This means that settlers are living on what is called “stolen land”. The settlers (or immigrants) of today may not have stolen the land themselves but they are still using it by living on it.
- Just because we may not see Indigenous peoples at school or in our neighbourhood does not mean that they are not around. They are living among us and are actually one of the fastest growing populations in Canada!



As settlers (or immigrants), we need to learn about the land we live on and take action against the issues affecting Indigenous peoples. Let's start by thinking about these questions:

In what ways have you seen or heard individual and systemic racism toward Indigenous communities?

How has the media made you think about Indigenous peoples?

How does your own race or identity affect the way you think about Indigenous peoples?

What will you do differently now to fight against racism toward Indigenous peoples?

You can learn more about how to support Indigenous communities in Poster 6: Becoming an Ally.

This learning series was made by teachers with the support of students, families, organizations and members from Indigenous, Black and Chinese communities.

For more student resources, visit ccncsj.ca/further-learning.

For citations, visit ccncsj.ca/infographics.

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