

Pre-Conference Workshop: Ally-ship in Libraries in an Era of Reconciliation

This interactive session will draw upon anti-racist theory to explore the history of racialized inequality between Indigenous peoples and white settler society in Canada. The official policy of multiculturalism has been an effective practice for minimizing the need for analyzing racism in Canada. More recently the national apology for residential schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have also worked to perpetuate an assumption that Canada has made retribution. Anti-racist education seeks to challenge these national discourses of benevolence. Racialized discourses were integral to colonization and imperialism and continue to provide a foundation for understanding current socio-political and educational conditions. Racism is effective in normalizing and naturalizing a system of inequality and injustice. For centuries, Indigenous people have asserted their right and fought for justice and restitution, despite colonial policies and practices that have been imposed on them by Canadians and which continue rampantly to this day. In this current state of racial and colonial inequality, developing an historical understanding of the race concept and its utility in enforcing a social hierarchy of human worth remains necessary.

This workshop will assist in building anti-racist knowledge and literacy. We will provide both historical and current examples of how similar processes of racialization continue in the everyday discourse and practices of Canadians in institutions such as health care, universities and libraries. Racialization plays out in hiring practices, committee work, teaching and learning situations, and more. What can and should reconciliation mean in this context? We will examine the possibilities for solidarity work across racial differences and discuss how the professional development and ethical practices of library staff can lead to examples of ally-ship. Central to anti-racist and justice work is the need for on-going self-reflection, which this workshop seeks to both start and support for your own journey.