

INTERROGATING EDI: AN EXPLORATION OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN LIBRARIES USING A REFLECTIVE LEARNING APPROACH

Kim Buschert & Sajni Lacey

The recently established Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee at UBC Okanagan Library encompasses representation from librarians, library staff, and student staff. The EDI Committee develops anti-racism initiatives based on campus directives and strategic documents, through its regular committee membership as well as through smaller working groups that are designed to include more staff members who wish to engage on specific topics such as Teaching, Learning, and Engagement, Indigenous Strategic Planning, and Recruitment and Retention.

One such working group is the Dismantling White Supremacy working group. The idea for this group stemmed from an essential question asked by our library's communications coordinator: why is EDI important to our library, and to academic libraries in general? In considering our response, and to better understand the complicity that a group of folks who are primarily white have in enabling and supporting the structures of white supremacy in the library and the academy (Brook, Ellenwood and Lazzaro, 2015), we decided to create a more intentional space to explore the theme of white supremacy in academic libraries, and the culture of whiteness, that consistently enables the structures of colonialism, imperialism, and oppression within the academic library and university context.

We wanted this exploration to be messy, and to counter the white supremacist culture of perfectionism (Centre for Community Organizations, 2019) and achievement culture in libraries (Farkas, 2021). To do this we struck our exploratory working group to start reading, listening, uncovering, recognizing, talking about and moving to identify ways to dismantle white supremacy in our library.

This presentation will discuss our working group's purpose and processes, and our preliminary findings.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to

- Identify components that you might wish to include in a plan for a collaborative working group on interrogating white supremacy in your library
- Learn about potential strategies to use, such as the Pomodoro technique and slow looking
- Understand the value of applying self-reflection to anti-racist work