

Anti-Racism Children's Activities: Faith-Based Ideas



**The United Church
of Canada**

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Introduction

What are some creative ways of exploring concepts of anti-racism, equity, and diversity with children? This resource is full of ideas!

These activities were created by diverse contributors from across The United Church of Canada, originally for the [40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism](#) in 2021. These are faith-based activities. Some are clearly about Bible stories, and some offer broader lessons about life.

The activities explore a range of issues related to cultural diversity and are meant for leaders of children. Some are perfect for children's story times during worship, some can be part of a broader Sunday school lesson, and others can be used by parents or other adults with children at home. Of course, you can also adapt them as you choose.

We hope you'll find this resource helpful as you work with children!

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Anti-Racism

The Larger Impacts of Racism

It is often easier to teach about racism by talking about overt acts of violence. A concrete example is easier to name and discuss. However, one element of racism that is important to understand is the way in which it is a system creating a spectrum of violence. Racism is not just about isolated incidents, but the ways racism creates a lived reality of oppression that can feel ever-present. Here is an example of one way you can teach children about the larger impacts of racism through embodied activities.

- Invite your child to hold a glass of water in their hand that has just a drop of water in it. Ask them how heavy it feels. Continue to add small amounts of water in the glass while they are still holding it. Ask them to continue reflecting on how heavy the glass feels.
- Some guiding reflections and questions could be:
- What is changing for you while you are holding this glass?
 - What feelings are you having right now? I think I might feel... (tired, worried).
 - What do you think should happen when the glass is too heavy for you to hold? We could... (make the person pouring in water stop, get help to hold the glass, empty the glass).
- Talk about how racism can make people feel like they are holding too much all the time. Working to end racism means stopping moments when we see something bad happen, and also making sure we stop all the small hurts from adding up too.

This exercise could be replicated with whatever items there are available in a household, such as books, stuffed animals, or sand at the park.

—Alcris Limongi

Hagar Hears God's Promise

Materials

The Family Story Bible

Objectives

- To explore an origin story
- To demonstrate the power of distance from a focus
- To reflect on privilege, race, and racism

Instructions

1. Devices, such as phones or tablets, are allowed and encouraged.
2. Ask for a set of three to five agreements on how to be together. For example: "We will take turns to speak..." "We will listen with our hearts and minds..."
3. Go outside in pairs (if possible) and find a spot to begin, like a tree on your street. Go over the activity.
4. You are to move away from the spot, and turn and look for your beginning spot at different stages. Each time you stop and look, you may take a photo. Each pair is to move in a different direction.
 - Move 10 metres, stop, and look.
 - Move 10 more metres, stop, and look.
 - Move 30 more metres, stop, and look.
5. Return to the starting spot and either speak there, if all are comfortable, or gather inside.
6. Review the three to five agreements on how to be together.
7. Have someone volunteer to read the Bible story.
8. Have everyone respond in turn to the story. Allow time at the end for those who did not share to respond if they want.

Reflection Questions

- What is one new thing you learned or never thought of?
- How did your starting spot look at each stage as you moved away? Did it change? What changed?
- How did the relationships in our Bible story change? What or who influenced these relationships?
- Have you ever had to distance yourself from a negative person or situation? How do you know if it's better to leave or speak up?
- How does this make you feel, and why?

Love's Words

Share genuine words of acceptance and encouragement, such as "I liked it when..." and "I admired your honesty about...."

—Brigid Maya Douglas

Encountering Apartheid

The experience of Wilbur Howard (The United Church of Canada's first Black person to be ordained, and first racialized person to serve as Moderator) brings to the forefront the issue of microaggressions. Wilbur Howard travelled to South Africa in 1975 on behalf of The United Church of Canada and had a similar experience. He was representing the United Church (a predominantly White denomination). After his trip, The United Church Observer reported that "the authorities were surprised to find that the moderator of the United Church was a Black man." When eating at restaurants in South Africa, Howard was required to receive his food from the back door.

Wilbur Howard was a minister. He loved serving God. Wilbur became the leader of The United Church of Canada and travelled to South Africa at a time when Black people couldn't do the same things as White people. This was happening in South Africa because the country had a system called apartheid, a government policy that separated South Africans as *Bantu* (all Black Africans), as *Coloured* (all mixed-race Africans), or as *White*. Apartheid was an official policy of the South African government from 1950 to 1994.

In the apartheid system, some people believed that White people were better than Black people. Laws would not allow White people and Black people to live in the same neighbourhoods. If Black people wanted to eat at White-owned restaurants they would have to get their food at the back door—they weren't allowed inside. Black people and White people weren't allowed to marry each other. People who were not White were not allowed to go to certain parts of the country, and had to apply for special documents if they wanted to move around.

Wilbur went to South Africa in 1975. When he got there, the government leaders were surprised to see a Black Canadian representing the United Church. When they discovered that he was Black they made him eat out of the backs of restaurants. They had assumed he was a White person because he had come from Canada and they thought that he had a White-sounding name.

Apartheid was legally abolished in South Africa in 1994, but the effects of racism and microaggressions continue today.

—Adam Kilner

Talking about White Supremacy

Canada is a diverse country and is home to millions of people.

In spite of its diversity, Indigenous and racialized peoples, as well as many minority people, have not been treated equally and equitably. European settlers came and stole land from Indigenous peoples. Settlers also made new laws that allowed them to control where Indigenous peoples lived, made ceremonies illegal, and forcibly took Indigenous children away from their families. This enactment of White supremacy was an act of genocide. Canada also enslaved Black peoples and indentured racialized peoples.

Many incidents of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism and violence continue in our communities. The realities of White supremacy in this country means that some people still do not believe that people of all racial identities deserve the same amount of love, kindness, and human rights; this causes Indigenous and racialized people to continue to live with violence and racial trauma.

How might you talk with children about White supremacy and its reality in Canada? How would you intentionally raise children who actively work against racism and work towards dismantling White supremacy? Amy Bell's article, "[How to raise an ally](#)," has some ideas. Add your own ideas, and engage children in conversations about racism and White supremacy.

—Alana Martin

Explore the Sacredness of Water

Water is sacred. Water is life. Without water, there is no life. Indigenous peoples from around the world have always known the sacredness of water and have been working hard to preserve water. As a family, explore the sacredness of water by reading Indigenous literature about water.

Here are some excellent books written by Indigenous people that will help deepen your understanding and engagement.

- [*The Water Walker*](#) by Joanne Robertson
- [*Nibi Is Water*](#) by Joanne Robertson
- [*Young Water Protectors: A Story About Standing Rock*](#) by Aslan Tudor
- [*Nibi's Water Song*](#) by Sunshine Tenasco

—Springwater Hester-Meawassige

Conversations about Racism

Use the following episodes on TVOkids to spark conversations about racism with children.

[How Do You Feel?](#)

When Akin hears that a friend is dealing with racism at school, he turns to his trusted friend Duane and some young pals for advice. Akin also demonstrates how a “calm down kit” can be a useful tool when we're feeling overwhelmed.

[That TVOkids Show: Racism Special](#)

In this special episode on racism, Laura is joined by TVO kid Amara, Child Counsellor Duane, and The Honourable Ahmed Hussen (former Minister of Families, Children and Social Development) to answer questions about systemic racism.

—Kathy Yango

Resisting Internalized Racism

Clear and consistent anti-racist messaging for children can help in unlearning and resisting internalized racism. There are several ways in which families can make use of affirmations in their anti-racism work. For example:

1. Develop a family affirmation and teach it to your children. Encourage them to repeat it after you as a ritual before heading out the door to school or as an end-of-day practice before bedtime.
2. If your child expresses a form of internalized racism, develop an affirmation that will directly challenge that thought. For example, if a child says: "I don't like my hair," a simple affirmation in response can be, "My hair is beautiful. I like how creative I can be with my hair." You may decide to create an art activity based on this affirmation, such as making a poster that they can display beside the mirror they use everyday. (You could also use a whiteboard marker to simply write the affirmation on a mirror.)
3. For older children, it may be possible to have a more in-depth conversation about the challenges they are facing and what words would be affirming to offer in response. This activity could lead to creating an art project like an affirmation deck, writing their affirmations with sidewalk chalk, or a video project where they record themselves speaking the affirmations out loud.

—Alcris Limongi

Stories from Other Perspectives

Over time, more and more children's books have been written *about* people who are Indigenous and racialized. The challenge, however, is to find stories written *by* people who are Indigenous and racialized. Too often, books are written from White perspectives about different racial groups. It's important for people to be able to tell their own stories, from their own experiences. As a result, you may have to do a bit of research! Black History, Asian Heritage, or Indigenous People's month resources from your local library are one place to start.

A book you could share with children is [Amazing Black Atlantic Canadians](#) by Lindsay Ruck and James Bentley.

What children's books have you found that are written by Indigenous and racialized authors?

—Beth Baskin

Information about Racism

It is easy to assume that the language of identity, with all of its political complexity, is too complicated to discuss with children. However, empowering children with age-appropriate information offers them opportunities to better articulate their feelings, experiences, and needs.

Here are several examples of resources that introduce concepts about race, racism, and racial identities.

- For high school youth, watch the short video [What does BIPOC mean? Canadian teens explain.](#)
- For young children: Read [A Kids Book about Racism](#) by Jelani Memory, or watch a [video](#) of the author reading the book.
- For young children: Watch Sesame Street's [Coming Together: Standing Up to Racism Town Hall.](#)

These discussion prompts can help you introduce and discuss the concept of identity.

- "Just like your name, there are other words that are special because they tell people about who you are. What do you think those words are?"
- "Your identities are something to be proud of because they make you the unique person you are."
- "If someone says something about one of your identities and it makes you feel bad, that does not mean your identity is wrong or bad."

Follow-Up Activity Ideas

- Create a collage that celebrates name, identity, and the many ways we understand ourselves.
- Look through pictures and photo albums as a starting point to talk about the different identities that have been important to ancestors, family, and community over the years.

—Michiko Bown-Kai

Learning about Decolonization

Younger children can watch [Nihi! KIDS TALK about Decolonization](#).

In this video, the Executive Director of the Commission on Decolonization, Melvin Won Pat-Borja, sits down with kids and teens in Guam to talk about what a colony is, how colonization affects their island, why decolonization is important, and more.

Background: The Indigenous people of Guam, the Chamoru, have lived there for thousands of years. After centuries of Spanish colonization, the island of Guam was captured by the United States in 1898, during the Spanish-American war. The US formally took control of the island in 1899. Guam is a key military base for the United States. After World War II, the Guam Organic Act of 1950 established Guam as an unincorporated organized territory of the United States.

After watching the video, discuss these questions together.

- What did you learn from this video?
- How does this make you feel?
- What do you know about the situations faced by Indigenous children in Canada?
- What similarities and differences can you describe between the reflections of these children and Canada?
- After hearing about what decolonization is, how do you think it might happen in Canada?
- What can you do to participate in decolonization?

Older children can watch [Your Decolonization](#), a video produced by Indigenous Youth Wellness. Indigenous youth talk about their views on decolonization and how they work on decolonizing themselves.

After watching the video, discuss these questions together.

- What do healthy relationships with others and the natural world look like to you?
- How can you learn to see things in different perspectives?
- What have you unlearned or relearned? What would you like to unlearn or relearn?
- What do you know about the situations faced by Indigenous youth in Canada?
- How can/will decolonization make a real difference in Canada?

—Alana Martin

Cooperation

Working Together

Play any game that emphasizes cooperation. There are many ideas online. Here is an example of an active game where all participants have to work together.

Balloon Up

Objective: Keep the balloon off the ground without breaking the circle.

- Participants form a circle and hold hands.
- One person throws a balloon into the circle. The group tries to keep the balloon from touching the ground as long as possible without letting go of each other's hands.
- The facilitator can set a time or add more balloons. Remember: Do not let go or let the balloon touch the ground. If you do, the whole group starts over!

—Dianne Hope

Genesis 1:26–31

Materials

New Revised Standard Bible or Inclusive Bible

Objectives

- To begin with an origin story
- To review social skills around conversation
- To build a family community

Instructions

1. Put all devices, such as phones or tablets, in a separate room.
2. Ask for a set of three to five agreements on how to be together. For example: “We will take turns to speak...,” and “We will listen with our hearts and minds....”
3. Have someone volunteer to read the Bible story.
4. Allow time for everyone to respond in turn to the story.

Reflection Questions

- What is one new thing you learned from the story or never thought of?
- What do we believe is the first gift that God gave humans?
- Why do you think God blessed humans after creating them?
- How may sharing in this way help our family become anti-racist?

Love's Words

Share genuine words of acceptance and encouragement, such as, “I feel blessed when you...” and “Something I am/you are good at is....”

—Brigid Maya Douglas

Talking about Social Justice

Invite the children to reflect on a recent time or a situation that felt unfair to them. What happened at the time?

Initially, some children may choose to share situations that happened at play or with other children—such as a time of playing together and another child did not share their toys, or if another child of the same age was calling them a bad name that made them upset, or if they raised their hand first at school but were not called on to share their response to a question.

Why did they think was it unfair? Did anyone help them deal with the situation? Who helped them and how? How did it feel to have someone help you?

Then, invite them to think about a time when something unfair happened to them but no one helped them or listened to them. How did they feel when no one helped or listened?

Some children may already understand social justice—the concept that all people deserve equal rights and opportunities (such as economic, political, and social). Invite them to think of social justice situations that are unfair (if they cannot think of any, they might need some prompting). As children, how might they respond to social justice situations that are unfair? What might they do? What might they also ask others to respond? Feel free to affirm that some social injustices might seem too big for children to respond to on their own—and that there is still something that can be done, that they can work together with other children and adults, and that they can still act. Affirm that they can play an important role when situations at play or in the world are unfair.

—Adele Halliday

Working Cooperatively

Invite children to think of times when they have worked cooperatively with other children. Ask questions such as:

- What did they do to work together?
- How did they work with each other?
- What was the result?
- How did they feel when they worked cooperatively?

Share with the children that there are times when people and groups work together cooperatively—including when realities are unfair for different racial groups. When people work together cooperatively to change laws and actions, we can support each other as we work for justice. This is not a competition to make sure that one group or community improves when others still live with inequality. Instead, the cooperative work for racial justice is work so that all peoples will be equal. Our movements for justice are linked.

Consider adding this activity to your discussion.

1. Gather some long thin strips of fabric (or paper, if you do not have easy access to fabric).
2. Ask the children to write their justice concerns on the fabric or paper. You could prompt them with some ideas or help them write what they brainstorm. Single words, such as “racism,” “poverty,” or “reconciliation” would work well.
3. Invite the children to braid the fabric (or paper) into a braid. Share with them that all of these movements for justice are linked together, and we can continue to work cooperatively around them.

Alternatively, if they have used paper strips, invite two children to pull the ends of one strip of paper before they start braiding them. It will likely tear easily! Then, after they've braided the strips, the same children can be invited to pull the ends and see if the paper tears. Hopefully it won't, or it will be harder to tear. Share with them that when we work cooperatively together, the result is much stronger.

—Adele Halliday

Cultural Diversity

Jeremy's Story

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Jeremy who loved to play basketball. He was very good at it. He could dribble, he could pass, he could shoot. He practised and practised. He dreamed of playing in the NBA like LeBron James and Kobe Bryant.

The problem was that people didn't believe in the boy. They thought that because his parents were from Taiwan that he wasn't good at basketball. College teams overlooked him. Professional teams overlooked him. They didn't look at his playing ability because of his race.

Very few Asian players are in the NBA. None of them had won a championship. Everyone assumed that Jeremy wouldn't be very good because he looked different. Jeremy worked hard. Jeremy practiced a lot. But he didn't get to play in a lot of games. His first team gave up on him. His second team gave up on him. His third team did something different. They made him a starter, and made sure he played in lots of games.

And Jeremy made lots of baskets! He set records for how many points he scored. His team won seven games in a row. He won awards.

Jeremy is outspoken about his faith. He knows that God helps him believe in himself when others don't. He works hard and keeps trying. Jeremy Lin was the first Asian American to win an NBA championship when he played with the Raptors in 2019!

What are some lessons and ideas that we could learn from Jeremy's life?

—Kenji Marui

How Are You Unique?

To help children understand the concept of intersectionality, draw a large flower with many petals around a centre circle. On the petals, write some words that describe different categories of identity: gender, race, language, country of birth, mental health, where you live, religion, age, ability/disability, education, and any other identifiers you choose. You may need to explain what some of these identifiers mean.

Next, invite the children to draw their own multi-petaled flower. In the centre circle, they can write their name. Have them fill in the details of their own petals using some of the identifiers you talked about. Adults can also create a flower and think about how their identifiers have changed over the years.

Encourage children to see these various identifiers as gifts of God that help to make each one of us unique and beautiful in God's eyes and to each other.

Wouldn't it be a boring world if we were all the same!

Invite the children to share their flowers with one another, but don't force sharing. Say a prayer, thanking God for the gift and beauty of diversity.

—Amy Crawford

What Is Implicit Bias?

There are many activities you can do with children or youth to explore how implicit bias works. One is called the Circle of Trust.

Invite them to make a list of six or seven people they trust who are not part of their family. After they've made their list, tell them you are going to read a list of words associated with diversity, and ask them to place a check mark beside any names on their list who fit the term (e.g., gender, race, religion, orientation, income/class). Then look at the list together.

Usually the list of trusted people shows a group of people who are quite similar to us. Ask why this might be.

—Bill Millar

Exploring Imagery and Symbols with an Anti-Racist Lens

Work on moving beyond simple definitions of light and dark, good and bad, with these activities.

- Go on a scavenger hunt! Look for beauty in places that you don't often look. How many things could you find at home, at church, at school, or at the park?
- A symbol is something that we use to represent something else that may be hard to describe (for instance, sometimes we use a candle as a symbol for Jesus' presence). For a day, make a list of symbols you see that use light and dark to represent something else. What do you notice? How does this list make you feel? How might someone else feel differently?

—Alydia Smith

Exploring My Family History

Commit to learning more about Canada's World War II history and, in particular, the stories that challenge the narrative that Canada is a peace-making country. Many Canadian families are connected to World War II through relatives who served in the armed forces. What does it mean to respect and honour the decisions and sacrifices made by our family members in the past while also being willing to critically investigate our country's failures?

As I do the work of learning about my family's experience with Japanese internment, it brings up more questions about the importance of all of us knowing more about our histories.

Knowing our family history can be an excellent way to better understand the ways that Whiteness is a social construct, and help create a sense of deeper connection when engaging in the work of anti-racism. For example, learning about the ways in which my grandfather from Newfoundland experienced conflict between Catholics and Protestants while growing up has made me realize the ways in which prejudices can travel across oceans.

I also want to recognize that especially for some racialized people, family histories have been lost through the violence of displacement, enslavement, and other acts of colonial violence.

How well do you know your family history? Have you traced your family history with attention to the ways that injustice and systems of oppression have impacted the story of who you are today?

—Michiko Bown-Kai

Inviting Self-Reflection

Self-reflection can help us explore not only how we feel about issues but also ways in which we can change our own attitudes and behaviour.

Discuss these questions together:

- Do you know anyone who is different from you? Have you talked about how there are many different kinds of people in the world? What kinds of differences do you notice?
- Did you know that God has made us all to be different?
- Have you ever noticed a garden full of violets, daffodils, roses, tulips, geraniums, daisies, and other kinds of flowers? How does variety make the garden more beautiful?
- How could this be the same with people?

—Adam Kilner

Exploring Cultural Diversity

Activity A

Find a map of the world (could be a globe, online, or a map in a book). Close your eyes, turn around three times, and point anywhere on map. Open your eyes and read which country you pointed to.

Find a book in the library or search for the country online. Learn at least three things about the people of that country, especially about the children.

Some things to look for:

- What makes them proud about themselves?
- What language or languages do they speak?
- What are the roles of their grandparents?
- What kind of music do they listen to?
- What musical instruments do they play?
- How big are their cities? towns?
- How many people live in single homes?

If a child from that country came to Canada, how would you welcome that child?

Activity B

Read the book *Stolen Words* by Melanie Florence or watch the [video](#).

After reading or listening to the book, discuss these questions together.

- Why is it important to learn a language?
- What would it be like if your teachers told you to use a language that your family did not speak or understand?
- How would you feel if you knew this story really happened in Canada?
- Why was it important for the girl and her grandfather to learn their own words or language? How did it make them feel?

—Emo Yango

Creative Activities

Challenging Either/Or

Either/or binary choices deny the real diversity and complexity that exists in the world. Use this activity as a way to expand on and challenge the either/or.

Materials: Get out your preferred art supplies and a piece of paper and pen.

Thinking fast, go around the circle and call out either/or ideas (e.g., sunny/rainy; hot/cold). If people are having trouble, play a round of "Would you rather...?" ("Would you rather eat cake or ice cream? Would you rather watch a comedy or horror?"). Write these down.

You can skip the verbal approach and draw the "either/or" without using words. Illustrate an image of a binary (for example, a moon and a sun for night/day) on a big piece of paper, in teams in a whole group. Or, you could do a silent circle.

Pass your drawing to the left. The next person writes down what they think the binary is. Then they fold their words under, and pass again. Once you get your own art back, open it up and look at everyone's guesses.

Now think of at least two things you could add to the either/or that challenge or expand on the binary. For example, for night/day, we could we add sunset, sunrise, twilight, or the full moon casting shadows in the middle of the night.

For older children, or teens and adults, you could explore (and try to draw) binaries that are a little more abstract. For example: good/bad, or something more complex, like included/excluded. How hard do you have to work to find those in-between ideas? How do things change when we make intentional space for more than two things?

Where do you, with all of your many cultural, relational, and spiritual roots, find resources and spaces to expand your love of God's fiercely complex world? In community? In readings, song, meditation, art?

—Julie Graham

Our Work against Racism Is Like a Circle

Materials: several different coloured beads, beading wire or elastic thread, scissors

An adult may want to measure the wire or thread so that it is long enough to circle around the children's wrists. Then, invite the children to make beaded bracelets by using any of the coloured beads and threading them one by one onto the pre-cut beading wire or the elastic thread. The children may want to thread their beads in a particular design or pattern.

Once the children have finished threading the beads, tie the ends together so that it forms a circle. This will be their bracelet. (For beading wire, you might need to use crimps and clasps to tie it together, but the elastic can likely be cut with scissors and the ends tied together in a knot).

After they have finished their creations, invite them to look at their bracelets. In what shape is their bracelet? Where does the bracelet start and where does it end? (The children might respond by saying that their bracelets are circles, or that the ending and beginning are in the same place, or that there is no ending and beginning.)

Encourage the children to think about endings and beginnings. Are there times when, like their bracelet, an ending is also a starting point? You might share that for every ending there is often a new beginning. For example, school ends but then it begins again. Christmas ends and a New Year begins.

Share with the children that sometimes our work against racism can have an ending and a beginning. We might finish learning in one way, and then start action in another way. Or, we might finish doing daily activities, and then start working on justice in different ways. Our work against racism is like a circle—the ending can also be a beginning. Invite them to wear their bracelets as a regular reminder of our work against racism.

—Adele Halliday

Explore Variety and Beauty of Skin Colours

Sing

["The Color of Me"](#) by Sesame Street

Listen

- [The Colors of Us](#) by Karen Katz. This is the story of a girl who, while painting pictures of her friends, uses words like "cinnamon," "peanut butter," "chocolate icing", and "honey" to describe the colours.
- [All the Colors We Are](#) by Katie Kissinger. This non-fiction book explains how we get our skin colour.

Create

Provide yellow, red, blue, and white paint. Children can mix these colours until they come up with their own skin tone. The instructional videos can help. Try coming up with words to describe the different shades (for example: tan, toast, sand, sienna, cinnamon, etc.).

- [Instructional video for leaders/teachers](#)
- [Instructional video for children](#)

—Kathy Yango

Gina's Story

This is an interactive storytelling.

Instruct the child/children to express their emotions while listening. When they hear certain words (listed below), they can respond by expressing that emotion.

- *sad* (could make a sad face)
- *surprise* (could gasp, open mouth, or widen eyes)
- *happy* (could clap hands, jump up and down, or say Yay!)
- *cold* (could shiver or give themselves or each other a hug)

Gina is a woman who dreamed of a better life. There was always war where she lived. People in the government took money for themselves. Forests were cut down or burned, and mining operations polluted rivers. Gina was always looking for a chance to leave her country.

One day somebody called Gina on the phone. She picked up the phone and heard a woman's voice on the other line. The woman told her to get ready because her flight to Canada would be in a few days. She would have a job when she got there. At that moment, Gina felt so *happy*!

She also felt *surprise*. Was it really happening? She was also *sad*. If she left, Gina would have to leave behind her husband and children. Her oldest son was named Kang, and Gayeng was still a baby.

Gina packed her clothes and other things she would need. She made sure to bring some pictures of her family, and hid them in her pocket. As she packed, she felt very *sad*. But Gina said to herself, "I need to go so that Kang and Gayeng will have a better future." She felt *happy* with the thought that she would be able to provide for her family.

Gina took an airplane to go to Canada. She was *excited*. It was her first time on a plane! Gina was also *happy*. And Gina was *sad*, and thought that she would really miss Kang and Gayeng and her husband so much.

When Gina arrived in Canada, it was winter. She felt so *cold*. Where she came from, it's always warm. Gina had been told that a man would meet her at the airport to help her. She waited and waited, but no one came. Gina realized that the woman who had told her there was a job for her in Canada had fooled her. She had taken Gina's money for the trip but had not helped her at all.

Gina felt *sad*. She walked from the airport to find a place to eat and rest. She walked and walked with her luggage and small backpack. She was hungry, afraid, and *cold*. But no one seemed to notice her. Gina was afraid to ask for help. She was afraid that people might reject her because of her skin colour and accent. She was very *sad*.

Then Gina saw a church with a big cross. She was *excited*. At home, a church was a place where kind people gathered. She entered the church and found a woman pastor. She felt relieved. And she felt *happy*.

Gina told her story to the pastor. The pastor cried. The pastor was *sad* too. Suddenly they were both crying. But Gina was crying because she felt that someone was listening to her story, and they could help her. She felt *happy* and comforted. The pastor gave Gina hot chicken soup and poutine. She also gave Gina a place to stay, with a nice bed and a warm bath. The pastor told her that she could stay there until she found work. The pastor also said she would take Gina to a government office to help her find assistance. When she was ready, she could meet more church members.

Gina felt *surprised* by the pastor's kindness. She was also *happy* to be warm and to have help. And she was *sad* because she missed her children. But Gina also felt confident about her future. Although she had been hungry, afraid, and *cold*, she now had a place to live and to be part of a great community.

—Ariel Siagan

Empathy

Genesis 21:1–21

Materials

New Revised Standard Bible or *Inclusive Bible*, crayons, paper, 3D object

Objectives

- To reflect on an origin story
- To reflect on influence and point of view
- To demonstrate the power of diversity of opinions

Instructions

1. Put all devices, such as phones or tablets, in a separate room.
2. Ask for a set of agreements on how to be together. For example: "We will take turns to speak..." or "We will listen with our hearts and minds..."
3. Sit together and place the object in the centre of the group.
4. From wherever you sit, draw what you see without changing your position.
5. Have someone volunteer to read the Bible story.
6. Have everyone respond in turn to the story. Allow time at the end for those who did not share to respond if they want.
7. After reading and reflecting on the story, swap positions and draw the object again. Compare the two images.

Reflection Questions

- What is one new thing you learned in this activity?
- How did Sarah feel and act, in your opinion? What about Abraham?
- How did Hagar feel and act, in your opinion?
- How may this story change your point of view?
- How was racism expressed in this story? What was God's response?
- In this biblical story, people encounter God intimately and have survived. How may this story about enslavement change your point of view? How does God respond in this story?
- What positions of privilege do you hold? How may God be responding to this?

Love's Words

Share genuine words of acceptance and encouragement, such as "I like your picture because..."

—Brigid Maya Douglas

Ways to Address Shadeism

Shadeism, or colourism, is the term for assumptions or stereotypes that are made based on one's skin tone or shade.

Have you talked with a child or youth about shadeism? Was it intentional? If you are unsure how to answer, there is work to be done.

In this section, you are invited, as a parent, guardian, youth, or friend of youth, to consider four pieces of advice from people of colour and White youth on what they would have appreciated from their parents as children.

1. Listen and ask. Then listen.

If you listen closely, chances are children will talk about shadeism, although it is not their responsibility. Take that opportunity. Ask them to explain. For instance, if they assume a stereotype based on skin colour, you could ask, "Why do you think that way?" Then listen. Be patient. Give them time to think about their answer.

2. Healthy representation!

Surround children with healthy BIPOC representation.

- Buy action figures or dolls with non-White shades.
- Buy children's books by authors who are part of the BIPOC community.
- Watch media that have real, genuine BIPOC characters and more than one skin tone.

3. Explain.

If a child or youth makes a stereotypical comment, be calm, be clear, and explain why what they have heard or said is harmful. If you feel they will not listen, ask them instead. Did they feel what they said could be harmful? Why? Once they respond, reaffirm or correct them.

4. Tell them you love them.

Tell them you love their appearance and that it is okay to talk about skin colour and race. Say that you are proud of them, that they are doing well, and that you support them.

—Hannah Kim-Cragg

Exploring Feelings

As a family, brainstorm what makes you tired or grumpy. You might want to depict these by writing them down, finding pictures to represent them, or drawing images yourself. Ask, "Why do these things make you tired or grumpy?"

Then do the opposite, and brainstorm what makes you feel energized and excited. In the same way, you might want to write them down, find pictures to represent them, or draw images of these things. Ask again, "Why do these things make you energized or excited?"

After thinking about what makes you tired or grumpy and what makes you energized and excited, think about how you can help other people. If there are things that help you be energized and excited, how can you help other people to be energized and excited? Maybe that's sharing something nice for them, or doing something to make life a little more special, or saying thank you for what you see them doing, think about who and how you can make someone's life more energetic and exciting.

—Mitchell Anderson

Rosie's Story

Watch [Rosie's Story](#), a video that shares the experience of a young girl who experiences poverty and hunger. After viewing the video, invite wondering about it:

- I wonder... if you have ever felt so hungry that you couldn't concentrate at school.
- I wonder... what you would do if you found out one of your friends or classmates was hungry.
- I wonder... how our country or leaders could work together to make sure no child goes to school hungry.

You may want to talk with your child about how much your family spends on groceries every month and what percentage of your family income is spent on groceries.

—Thea Sheridan-Jonah

Talking about Inclusion and Belonging

There are many different options that can be used in a discussion about inclusion and belonging. I would suggest choosing imagery that best matches the experience of the child you are connecting with. Here are some example questions.

Guiding Questions

1. When we go to the park and play soccer, how is the field set up?
2. Things like nets help us to be able to play together. How would you feel about playing soccer if the nets were different sizes? If you didn't trust the referee? If the field had lots of holes you could trip on?
3. Even if things didn't seem fair, what if everyone else playing said: But we want you to play with us! It's okay, you're allowed to play!

Guiding Thought

When we hear people say something isn't fair or that they are worried something doesn't feel safe for them, it is important that we listen. Sometimes we might have to stop playing the game we are playing. We might have to make big changes like finding a new referee or moving to a different field.

What's most important is that you listen and are ready to make changes. This is what many of us are trying to do when it comes to racism—we know that if we want to solve the problems we have to be willing to make big changes, not just try to include people in ways that don't feel good.

—Michiko Bown-Kai

Exploring Diversity in Media

Invite children to watch or read a movie, book, or other form of media where there are diverse characters (of all genders) with more than one characteristic. After watching the media, ask some questions about the characters. As a parent or peer, invite your peer/child to answer how they feel the characters were portrayed.

Ask questions such as:

- If you could describe this character in three words, what would they be?
- How do you think this character is feeling? Happy, angry, or sad? Why?

Invite the child to explain their reasoning. If the child is older, simply ask them to think critically about how the characters are represented.

End the discussion by ensuring the child knows that when writing or telling their own stories, it is important to give all characters more than one defining characteristic, in the same way that all people should not be categorized or defined by one trait. These terms and this dialogue give a space for youth to critically think, learn, and grow into anti-racist thinking and work.

—Hannah Kim-Cragg

Masking Identity

James Cone talked about having to “wear a mask” as a young person. The mask wasn’t a physical mask, but a symbolic one. A symbol is something that represents another thing—like a cross represents Jesus or the church, or a heart represents love. Can you think of any other symbols?

James’s mask was a symbol. He was really talking about having to hide his identity so that he wouldn’t draw attention to himself. James, a Black man, was very worried about sharing an opinion that a White person might not agree with. He was worried that when he went to university he wouldn’t be able to share true feelings about the most important issues of his day.

One day James decided to take the risk and just be himself. He took off his symbolic mask and expressed who he is. James then became known all over the world as an amazing scholar and writer.

Here are some questions to talk about:

- I wonder how it feels to wear a symbolic mask?
- I wonder how James felt when he wore that symbolic mask?
- I wonder if James ever wished he could put his mask back on?
- Have you ever felt like wearing a mask so that others wouldn't know something about you? Why?

—Adam Kilner

Learning about My Family

This activity is best done with a child you know well.

1. Talk with the child about where they were born and what you might know about the day they were born. Talk about where you were born and what you know about the time and circumstance. If you know about your own parents, or the child's grandparents, share what you know about where and when they were born.
2. Ask the child what some of their favourite family rituals or traditions are. Prompt them into thinking about how holidays or birthdays are celebrated and what foods they like to eat as a family. Does your family speak a language at home that isn't spoken at school or with other children? Talk about why your family might have developed these rituals, practices, or ways of communicating with one another.
3. Identify at least one thing that you didn't know before that you have now found out.
4. How does it make you feel? Are you happy that you know this now? Are you sad that you know this? Does this make you feel more whole? Does this make you want to learn more?
5. How would you feel if you lost this new thing that you have learned? How can you keep it?

—Carla Leon

Stories of Migration

Tell children and youth the stories of migration today. You could share your own or your ancestors' story of moving to new places or countries if applicable. You could talk about the refugee crisis by using resources such as books, articles, pictures, or videos. Here are some suggestions on how to speak to children about refugees:

- [How to Talk to Kids about Refugees](#)
- [Teaching about the Syrian Refugee Crisis](#)
- [From Syria to Canada: How One Boy Found a Home on the Ice](#)
- [What Is a Caravan of Migrants?](#)

I'd like to share some stories of immigrants in my region of Saskatchewan:

- [Black on the Prairies](#)
- [A Muslim Teacher in Regina](#)
- [My Farmland](#)

Tell children and youth Bible stories of migration. Some people in the Bible left their homeland in response to God's calling for a greater purpose. Others were forced to move to other places due to famine, personal conflict, or war. For Jesus and his disciples, traveling and taking the risk of becoming a stranger/guest was part of their ministry of carrying the gospel of God's beloved community to others. Help children connect the Bible stories with contemporary stories of refugees and immigrants.

There are numerous videos of Bible stories, including:

- [Abraham and Sarah](#)
- [Moses and Exodus](#)
- [Story of Ruth](#)
- [Following Jesus](#)

—SunDo Hyun

What You Are Called Is Not Who You Really Are

Invite children to reflect on their own names. Ask them if they know if their name has a special meaning. Do they have a nickname? Were they named after someone else?

Were they ever called bad names or names that made them feel sad? The names they were called may have been racist, sexist, or homophobic, or generally mean or hurtful in other ways. When they were called mean names, how did they feel? What did they do and how did they respond? Did they tell an adult such as a parent or teacher? Did they speak directly back to the person and say they did not like being called that name?

Encourage positive ways for children to respond when they are called names. They could choose, for example, to ignore the person calling them names. They could tell an adult. They could speak back to the person who called them names, and say firmly that they do not like being called those names. Ask the children if there are other ways that they could respond to name-calling.

Assure them that any bad names they are called is not who they really are. They are children who are known and loved by God. They are special.

Finally, ask them about any positive and affirming names that they have been called. Who called them that? How did that make them feel? Encourage them to write down some of these words (or younger children could draw a picture about how the words made them feel) so that they can remember the positive words and their feelings.

—Adele Halliday

Samantha's Story

Tell this brief, but true, story about Samantha and discuss the questions that follow.

Samantha is in Grade 2. Chelsey, who is White, has been in the same class with Samantha since Kindergarten. One day, Samantha came in from recess in tears. She reported to her teacher that she heard Chelsey say to some other girls on the playground that "Samantha doesn't have any friends because she's Black."

- What do you think about this story?
- Do you think what Chelsey said could be true? How do you think Samantha might feel?
- Do you think it is right to exclude others because they are different?
- What would you say to Chelsey?
- What would you say to Samantha?
- Do you know anybody in your school who is left out because of their skin colour or appearance? How could you be a friend to them?

—Kathy Yango

Becoming an Ally

Talk about what it means to be an ally. Children can think about when they were an ally and when they experienced someone being an ally to them.

To help with the discussion, here are a few videos for kids on allyship.

Soyheat: [Kids Explain Allyship](#)

Take the challenge and pass it on! After hearing those definitions, ask if a child is ready to explain allyship to someone else.

Evelyn from the Internets: [How to Be an Ally](#)

(Note: Evelyn uses the phrase "Shut up and listen" in this video—you may want to have a conversation with your children about when to say/use that phrase and when not to.) Discuss the questions posed: How can someone be a better ally to you? And how do you plan on being a better ally to someone else? Also, discuss how you will balance listening *and* speaking as an ally.

—Alana Martin

Talking about Segregation

Explore these resources with children:

- [Africville](#) by Shauntay Grant and illustrated by Eva Campbell
- [Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged!](#) by Jody Nyasha Warner and illustrated by Richard Rudnicki (also available in French, translated by Louise Binette, 2013)
- WNYC, [Kids Talk about Segregation](#)

—SunDo Hyun