

Discriminatory Matters

GRADES
4-12



'The Canvas': The Power of Active Witnessing

This lesson emphasizes the importance of speaking out when witnessing discrimination and injustice. Students will screen various forms of discriminatory scenarios in the video Canvas and use them as tools to practice responding to incidents with appropriate and effective language. These role plays will empower students to use their skills and language as 'Active Witnesses' to help stop discrimination in their lives and beyond.

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NOTE: It is expected that students have an understanding of the following terms before engaging in this lesson: stereotype, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, and ally
(See: "Definitions" and "STEPS of Power/Empowerment" at the end of this lesson)



Estimated Time: 1.5-2 hours (2 class periods)



Goals

- ✓ To show empathy and describe others' feelings in an increasing range of situations.
- ✓ To develop an awareness and understanding of the nature and consequences of various forms of discrimination
- ✓ To demonstrate attributes and behaviours that promote social justice, including recognizing injustice, fair-mindedness, embracing diversity, empathy and taking action
- ✓ To speak out and take action to support diversity and defend human rights, even when that may not be a popular stance.
- ✓ To practice a wide range of verbal and behavioural responses when they witness discrimination and feel empowered to respond as Active Witnesses.



Prep/Materials

- DVD player, Youth MADE Video: *Canvas*
- Large sticky notes or index cards
- Chart paper
- Witnessing Triangle (see end of lesson)
- Active Witnessing Response Cue-cards (see end of lesson)
- Student Reflection Journals
- Role play Rubric (see end of lesson)



Energizer: Heads Up/Heads Down: Partner up (10 minutes)

Ask the students to form a circle and explain that you will be giving them two sets of instructions repeatedly, “Heads Up” and “Heads Down.” When you say “Heads Down,” everyone must look down. When you say “Heads Up,” everyone must look up and straight into the eyes of someone in the circle.

If they are looking at someone who is looking at someone else, they remain in the circle. If they are looking at someone who is looking right back at them, they must both point at the other person and say the person’s name. Those students then partner up outside of the circle and observe the rest of the activity. Once all the partners have left the circle, repeat the activity until all students have a partner. Ask students to find a creative way to determine whether they will be Partner A or Partner B (e.g. rock paper scissors game).

Part 1 Reflecting on lived experiences: What might you say/do? (30 -35 minutes)



1. Hand out sticky notes to each of the paired groups. Invite students to think of a time when they witnessed a friend, a family member or a stranger involved in a discriminatory incident. After a few minutes of quiet reflection, ask Partner A students to share their lived experiences with their partners by answering the following questions:

- Who was involved?
- What did you say or do when you witnessed the incident and why?
- How did your response make you feel?

2. Partner B will record their partner’s answer from ‘Question b’ on a sticky note. Next, ask Partner B to share their lived experiences and have their partners record their answers from ‘Question b’ on a sticky note.

3. Tell students that you will revisit their sticky notes in a later activity. Introduce the *Witnessing Triangle* (p. 80), the five main parties involved in a discriminatory incident:

1. Self as a WITNESS: You as an observer to an incident who might respond appropriately with action and words.
2. The CO-WITNESS(ES): An observer(s) to an incident who might respond appropriately with action and words.
3. The OFFENDER(S): The person(s) who treats another person in a discriminatory way, through words or actions.
4. The RECEIVER(S): The person(s) who receives the discriminatory remark or treatment in an incident.
5. The EXTERNALS/OUTSIDERS: Those who are not present at the time of an incident but may be asked to assist.

4. Ask students to think about the parties that were present in the experience they just shared with their partners and ask the following questions:

- Who tends to hold the most 'power' in the Witnessing Triangle? (Most students will say the Offender or the Witness. Both parties hold power for various reasons but the Offender tends to hold the most power as the Witnesses tend to remain silent. Discuss the impact of silence. Ask students, What might an Offender think if the Witnesses remained silent during an incident. How is silence perceived?)
- Of the various parties, who are there generally more of during a discriminatory incident? (There tends to be more Witnesses during discriminatory incidents).
- Who has the potential to hold the most power? Witnesses have the potential to hold the most power if they 'speak up' as there are generally more witnesses during discriminatory incidents. (Witnesses have the power to be allies and speak out against the discrimination, support the Receiver and to get help from an External/Outsider)
- Revisit your 'Question b' answers on the sticky notes. How could you have responded differently? (Tell students that witnesses have the 'power' to respond to any of the parties involved in the incident using language to diffuse the situation. Tell them that there are Four Levels of Witnessing and to think about what level of witnessing they demonstrated during their incident).

Four Levels of Witnessing

<p>Dis-witnessing (Joining or Ignoring):</p>	<p>Student joining the offender; blocking awareness; denying or avoiding the situation "<u>Not hearing, Not seeing, Not feeling, Not doing</u>"</p>
<p>Passive Witnessing (Observing):</p>	<p>Student keeping silent; thinking about responding; feeling confused "<u>Hearing, Seeing, Feeling but Not Doing</u>"</p>
<p>Active Witnessing (Responding):</p>	<p>Student responding with action, using appropriate and effective language; response may be immediate or delayed "<u>Hearing, Seeing, Feeling and Doing</u>"</p>
<p>Ethical Witnessing with Social Action (Teaching):</p>	<p>Student recognizing unfair treatment; has a desire to change behaviours; and teaching and encouraging others to make change in the school community and beyond Moving Beyond "<u>Hearing, Seeing, Feeling and Doing</u>"</p>

Tell students that taking an active role and responding appropriately during a discriminatory incident, rather than remaining silent is called **Active Witnessing**. An active witness uses appropriate and effective language to respond to one of the parties in the **Witnessing Triangle** (Co-witness, Receiver, Offender, External/Outsider).

5. Using 5 pieces of chart paper, display a five column chart on the board/wall. Write the **Dis-witness**, **Passive Witness**, **Active Witness**, **Ethical Witness** and **Active Witnessing Responses** as headings across the top of the chart papers. Ask students to place their sticky notes in the column that best represents the type of witnessing that they believe their partner demonstrated during their personal incident.

6. Ask the class what they notice about the pattern of where the sticky notes are placed. Most of them will likely be placed in the 'Passive Witness' column and if so, ask students questions such as:

- Why do you think most students were **Passive Witnesses** during the incidents?
- Why might it be difficult to respond as an 'Active Witness'? (e.g. fear, confusion, shock, unsure of what to do, relying on someone else to help etc.)

Explain that although there are many valid reasons that make it extremely challenging to respond and take action during these incidents, it is important to learn to break the 'Code of Silence' and help stop injustice and discrimination.

Part 2 Screening the Youth MADE Video Canvas (30 -35 minutes)



Tell students that they will now be screening a video that will demonstrate various forms of discriminatory scenarios. Screen the entire video and ask students for general reactions, comments or questions. Screen the video again, pausing after each discriminatory scenario to engage students in the following questions:



Debrief Questions:

- What was the issue(s) raised in the scenario? What form(s) of discrimination was exemplified? If there are more than one, how are they related? (e.g. relational aggression, exclusion, social isolation, rejection, individual racism, transphobia, physical aggression, hate crime)
- Name the **Offender(s)**, **Receiver(s)** and **Witness(es)**. How do you think each party felt?
- If witnesses were involved, how did they respond? What level of witnessing did they demonstrate? How could they have responded differently?
- If you were a witness in the scenario, what might you have said? Ask students to tell their partners their responses and for them to record their favourite responses (and to whom they would respond) on sticky notes. Invite a few students to share their responses with the class and to add these sticky notes to the **Active Witnessing Responses** column on the chart.

1. Ask the paired students to form quads with a pair closest to them. Distribute the **Active Witnessing Response Cue-Cards** and ask them to choose one student to deal eight cards to each student in the group and to take a few minutes to read the responses. Explain that these responses are meant to be helpful, rather than hurtful and are used to diffuse rather than escalate a discriminatory incident. Remind students that a calm and neutral tone of voice and body language that exhibits openness will also help diffuse the situation.

2. Screen *Canvas* once again and ask students to imagine that they are a witness in the scenario and to think about how they might respond. Pause after each of the three discriminatory scenarios and ask them to do the following:

1. Select a response from your cue cards that you might feel comfortable using as a witness in this scenario (Or invite them to use one of their own responses from their sticky notes or a combination of a cue card response and their own. Remind students that their responses must be appropriate and help diffuse rather than escalate the situation).
2. Think about who you might respond to in the Witnessing Triangle (Co-witness, Receiver, Offender or External/Outsider).
3. Share your selected response (and to whom you are responding) with your small group members.
4. Choose one member from your group to share your favourite response with the class.
5. Record your group's favourite response on a sticky note and post it on the Active Witnessing Responses column on the chart.



NOTE: After each scenario, ask the dealer from each group to deal out a few more cards to each student to provide them with more response options. By the end of the activity, there will be a number of 'favourite responses' in the 'Active Witnessing Responses' column of the chart for use in the wrap up activity.



Wrap Up: (30 minutes)

☆ Invite students to work in small groups to re-enact one of *Canvas* scenarios of their choice. Ask them to role play how they might have changed the outcome by responding as 'Active Witnesses'. Ask them to use their own responses, responses from the chart or responses from the *Active Witnessing Response Cue-Cards* to demonstrate how they might respond.

☆ During the role play presentations, use the Forum Theatre format to freeze during the scenario and invite other students to take on the roles of the various parties to show different ways in which students might respond to the incident.



Facilitator Tip:

Role plays are successful when they are performed respectfully. Teachers may want to choose roles for students (do not let known receivers, play the receiver role or known offenders to play offenders). Remind students that no physical contact is allowed in the role plays.



NOTE: The discriminatory scenarios featured in *Canvas* are fabricated to demonstrate various forms of discrimination and students are encouraged to use them as tools to practice active witnessing responses. Ensure that students have an opportunity to do the follow up activity which enables them to reflect on their own lived experiences and how they might respond as active witnesses in future incidents of discrimination and injustice.

☆ Invite students to write responses to the following suggested questions in their reflection journals:

- Describe how you felt when you used the Active Witnessing responses.
- How might you apply what you have learned from this lesson to real-life situations?
- What are helpful strategies to use in order to speak out against discrimination as a witness?
- What are some challenges that you might face in using these 'Active Witnessing' responses?
- How might you encourage your friends or family members to speak out against discrimination?



Assessment & Evaluation

- ✓ Assess that students have honoured the Class Community Agreements during the lesson discussions and activities (*You may also invite students to do self and peer assessments)

Look for evidence that student reflection journal responses . . .

- ✓ are insightful, personal and thoughtful
- ✓ demonstrate a detailed and thorough awareness and knowledge of the ideas/concepts addressed in class
- ✓ combine previous experience and learning with frequent references to class activities and discussions.

Look for evidence that reflection journal responses demonstrate students' understanding of:

- ✓ the main messages from the video/animation *Canvas*
- ✓ our individual and collective responsibility to practice Active Witnessing by speaking out against discrimination and injustice
- ✓ Observe student engagement and assess how cooperatively students are working together during the small group activities. Look for evidence of active listening, participation and cooperation (*You may also invite students to do self and peer assessments)
- ✓ Assess students' role plays. Look for evidence that they used appropriate and effective responses, tone and body language to speak out against discrimination. You may use the *Role play Rubric* (see end of lesson)



*You may use the following rubric scale to evaluate the above assessments: Powerful=5; Confident=4; Developing=3; Beginning=2; and Not yet meeting expectations=1.



Follow Up:

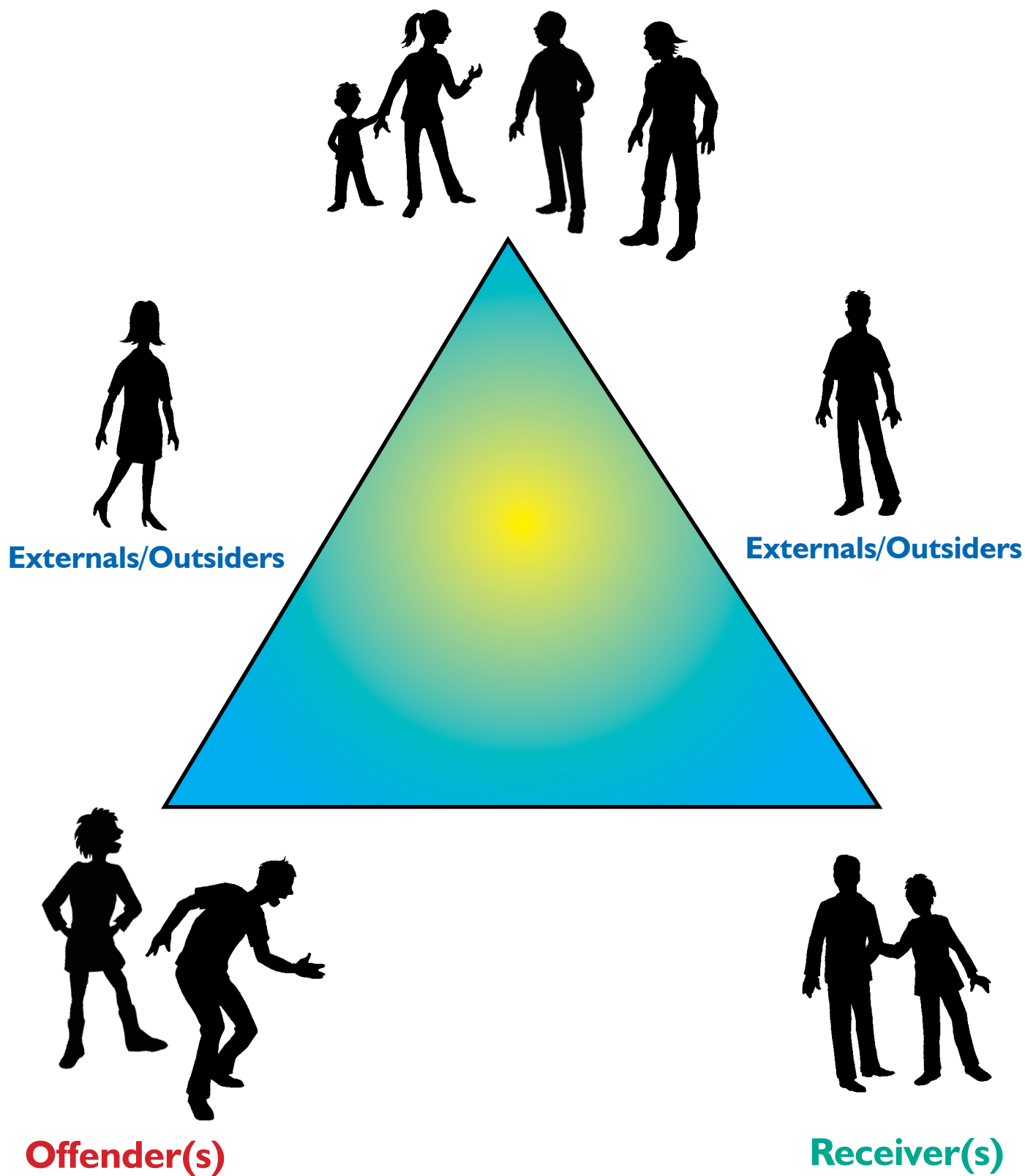
- ☆ Invite students to write their own role play scripts to reflect the discriminatory incidents that they have experienced as a Witness, Receiver, Offender or External/Outsider, incorporating the responses they have developed with the class.
- ☆ Have students present their role plays to the class for feedback regarding alternative ways for the witnesses to respond to the incident.
- ☆ Invite students to present their role plays to students in younger grades in the school or to elementary feeder school students in order to model and teach how to 'Break the Silence'.
- ☆ Revisit active witnessing responses as various discriminatory situations arise in the class and/or school community

The Power of Ten

Active Witnessing is everyone's choice and responsibility. It can help build a better community based on mutual respect and commitment to humanity. If one active witness can encourage and empower ten other individuals, it is the power of ten each year . . . we can start a chain reaction leading to positive social change with a small action and a big heart (Ishiyama, 2002).

WITNESSING TRIANGLE

Witness & Co-witness(es)



Role Play Rubric

Date: _____ Student: _____

Group Members: _____

SCORING CRITERIA	5 Strong	4 Competent	3 Developing	2 Beginning	1 Not yet meeting expectations
Demonstrates awareness of audience					
Voice is clear, audible and includes varied intonation					
Exhibits feeling and expression					
Demonstrates confidence, poise and effective body language					
Presents characters appropriately (e.g. witness, offender, receiver)					
Stays on task and responds to partner's or group's cues or questions					
Accomplished the purpose of the role play (e.g. active witnessing)					

Responses To The Offender(s)

Wait a minute.	Excuse me, but what did you say? Could you repeat that? (or) What do you mean?
I'm surprised to hear you say this. (or) Ouch! That hurts!	That's homophobic/racist/ sexist/classist...
That's not funny.	I'm not comfortable with what you just said.
Has your experience always been this negative?	If I were you, I'd be really embarrassed to have said that.
I disagree. (or) I don't feel that way. (or) That's not true. (or) That's not fair.	It sounds like a stereotype (or) bias (or) a prejudice.
Everyone? (or) Always? (or) All the time?	Are you sure? Where's the proof?

Adapted from Angela Brown, M.Ed. & F. Ishu Ishiyama, Ph.d (2009). *Break the Silence: The Power of Active Witnessing*. Intermediate Curriculum Document. Vancouver Board of Education and © F. Ishu Ishiyama, Ph.d (2006). *Active Witnessing for Prejudice Reduction and Community Development: Trainers' Manual for Facilitating Anti-discrimination Response Training (A.R.T.)*.

Responses To The Receiver(s)

<p>I'm on your side. (or) I'm with you. (or) My friends and I saw what happened and we're worried about you.</p>	<p>Do you realize what he/she has just done to you? It was discriminating. (or) What he/she did is wrong/hurtful because . . .</p>
<p>That must have hurt/annoyed/disappointed you.</p>	<p>I wish he/she hadn't said such an unfair/awful/rude/ ___ thing.</p>
<p>Are you alright? You don't deserve this. It's so unfair.</p>	<p>How frustrating/embarrassing this must be for you! I think you/we should tell this person how you feel.</p>
<p>How are you feeling? (or) If I were you, I would feel really annoyed and offended. (or) You must feel offended/hurt/___.</p>	<p>It must have been terrible to be treated like this. This happened to me once . . .</p>
<p>I'll go with you to find a teacher/parent/principal/supervision aide to get help. (or) Let's go and get some help.</p>	<p>It was a racist/homophobic/sexist/ _____ comment. He/she should say sorry.</p>
<p>I'm feeling sad/upset/worried. How about you? (or) I am shocked! Are you okay?</p>	<p>This is not the first time this has happened. What did you do the last time?</p>

Responses To The Co-witness(es)

<p>I can't believe it. Did you hear what I heard?</p>	<p>We can't just stand around and do nothing.</p>
<p>Ouch! That must have really hurt.</p>	<p>I'm scared to say something. But I don't want to ignore this or walk away. Will you back me up?</p>
<p>I don't know what we should do but we have to do something.</p>	<p>The class should know about this. Let's talk to the teacher.</p>
<p>I'm feeling really uncomfortable about this. What do you think?</p>	<p>We can't keep silent and let this go on.</p>
<p>Who else thinks this is unfair (or) wrong?</p>	<p>This is a kind of discrimination (or racism/homophobia/sexism). No one should be treated like this.</p>

Responses To The External Outsider(s)

<p>This is serious. We need your help.</p>	<p>This is what I saw yesterday. We need to do something today.</p>
<p>I'm very upset/worried/angry _____ about what happened today.</p>	<p>I trust you and need to talk to you. This is what happened to my friend.</p>
<p>Can you please help me?</p>	<p>We need your help/advice/support now.</p>
<p>My friend is in trouble. What should I do?</p>	<p>This is what happened. I think ... What do you think?</p>
<p>Let's talk to someone from the _____ (Student Council/ GSA/ Diversity Club)</p>	<p>We can't let this go on in our school. This is a form of _____ (homophobia, racism, classism, discrimination etc.)</p>

CANVAS DEFINITIONS

Stereotype

A false or general belief about a group of people that ignores the individual differences within that group

Prejudice

A frame of mind that tends to pre-judge a person or group in a negative light. This negative judgment is usually made without adequate evidence. These negative attitudes are often not recognized as unsoundly based assumptions because of the frequency with which they are repeated. They become “common sense” notions that are widely accepted, and are used to justify acts of discrimination

Discrimination

The unequal treatment of people based on their membership in a group. It happens when people act on their prejudices. One may be discriminated against based on his or her age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, ability, class etc.

Oppression

The unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power. Often refers specifically to abuse of power with a systemic and historical expression. (Racism, Homophobia/Heterosexism, Sexism, Classism, Ableism, etc. are examples of different forms of Oppression)

Ally

A person who recognizes the unearned privilege they receive by being a member of a dominant group and supports marginalized, silenced, or less privileged groups without actually being a member of those groups. Examples could be men who work to end sexism, white people who work to end racism, heterosexual people who work to end heterosexism, able-bodied people who work to end ableism, and so on.

Other pertinent terms:

Power

Power-over is the dominant form in our society. Often associated with violence or the threat of violence, power-over is the ability to force others to submit to your will, regardless of their wishes.

Power-from-within refers to the inner strength associated with courage, conviction, creativity and self-discipline. For some, power-within carries strong spiritual connotations.

Power-with is the result when we co-operate with others to achieve shared ends. It comes from our ability to listen to, empathize with and understand others, and to identify shared beliefs or interests.

Power-with is both the key to multiplying our individual strength, and the ultimate goal of reshaping society along fair and just lines. (Ally-work is a great example of this!)

Privilege

Unearned power that gives certain groups economic, social and political advantages in society.

CANVAS DEFINITIONS cont...

Individual racism

is commonly referred to as individual expressions of negative attitudes or behaviours such as racial slurs, harassment, racial graffiti or aggressive acts. Most people recognize this form of racism but perceive it to be overt racial hatred acted out by bigoted social deviants. It is important for us to recognize that individual racism is deeply rooted in the individual's system of beliefs, values and his/her ideology of racial superiority. (Henry & Tator, 2000)

Systemic racism

Is implicit and mostly invisible; it is embedded in the policies and practices of institutions and organizations. Systemic racism operates directly or indirectly to sustain the power structure and advantages enjoyed by the dominant groups. It results in the unequal distribution of economic, social and political resources and reward among different "racial" groups. It also denies People of Colour access to fully participate in society and creates barriers to education, employment, housing, and other services available to the dominant group (ibid.).

Cultural racism

is a system of values and ideologies that are based on racial differences, cultural superiority and inferiority. These values are produced, maintained and reproduced through powerful institutions like the media and popular culture such that the dominant ideologies become the "taken-for-grant" and norm for society. This form of racism is entrenched in society and it supports, allows and perpetuates individual and systemic racism.