

Facing Hate in Canada

By the Westcoast Coalition for Human Dignity

Roots of Canadian Bigotry and Resistance

In 1998 Canada, along with other nations, celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Declaration was an unprecedented recognition by the international community that the racial hatred and bigotry that fuelled the Holocaust - the Nazis' extermination of 6 million Jews - and the persecution of millions of Roma (gypsies), homosexuals, and anti-fascists should never happen again. Yet, despite international laws and Canada's own multicultural policies and human rights laws, racism and bigotry still exist.

Real social change begins only when individuals examine their own society's history of bigotry and discrimination. Critically analyzing this history as the foundation for modern-day manifestations of racism, religious bigotry and homophobia can provide the tools for promoting social justice and equality today.

The colonization of Aboriginal lands by European immigrants was a process that wove racism into the very fabric of Canadian society. Since then, government and institutional policies have limited the citizenship rights of Aboriginal people, people of colour, religious minorities and gays and lesbians. This is part of Canada's history of hate. Bigotry against these groups barred them from certain jobs, voting, receiving public education, buying property and even from entering Canada.

Did you know that....

- Aboriginal people faced the denigration of their traditions and culture when the federal government banned the practice of potlaches and some traditional Indian dances. Implemented in 1884, this ban was not lifted until 1951.
- Between the 1870s and the late 1940s, Aboriginal people, people of Chinese (link to Chinese Canadian National Council - <http://www.ccnc.ca/toronto/history/>) and Japanese origin were denied the right to vote in Canada.
- In 1908, federal immigration law allowed for the rejection of immigrants "belonging to any race deemed unsuitable to the climate or requirements of Canada".
- Between 1850 and 1964, the Ontario, government allowed segregation of African Canadians in public schools.
- Already experiencing the ban on cultural activities like the potlatch, Aboriginal children were forced to leave their families and communities and attend residential schools.
- In BC, changes to the Public Schools Act in 1908 allowed public schools to reject a child on racial grounds.

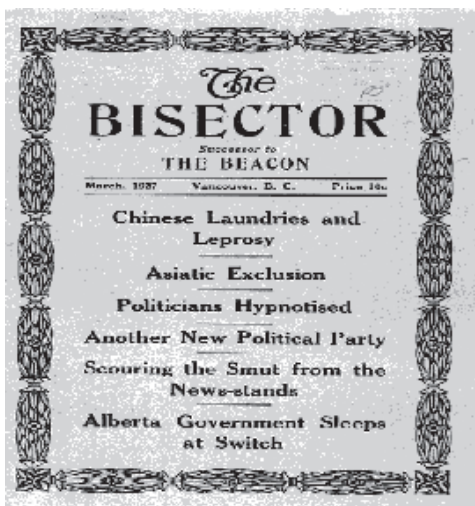


- In 1945, the University of Manitoba became the first Canadian University to remove admission quotas against Jews and other “non-preferred” groups.
- During the 1950s, homosexuals and people suspected of being homosexual were fired from jobs with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board, the National Research Council and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In fact, homosexual acts (link to University of Toronto’s Sexual Education Centre - <http://www.campuslife.utoronto.ca/services/sec/homophob.html>) between consenting adults was considered a crime until 1969.
- For example, some First Nations, like the Cowichan of Vancouver Island, petitioned the government to change section 149 of the *Indian Act*, which banned the potlatch and the Tamanawana dance. Others, like the Kwakiutl, continued their potlatch ceremonies despite the ban and risked jail terms to preserve their values and way of life. (link to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.
- Canada was the destination of an estimated 30,000 African-Americans escaping slavery. Groups such as the Toronto-based Anti-Slavery Society played an essential role in the “underground railway”.
- In 1907, using sticks, rocks and barricades, Chinese and Japanese residents of Vancouver fended off rioters led by the Asiatic Exclusion League who were trying to destroy their homes and businesses. The riot mirrored similar incidents throughout the Pacific Northwest, (link to the Asian Canadian - <http://www.asian.ca/history/>) including the 1871 riot in Los Angeles that led to the murder of 23 Chinese men.
- In 1945, Viola Desmond challenged “black seating” in Nova Scotia theatres. “Black seating” was the practice of segregating black patrons to balcony seats. Her subsequent arrest and charge raised the issue all the way to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, which ultimately declined to hear her case. Ms. Desmond exemplifies the dignity of the human spirit and the right to equality under the law.

Fighting Back

In Canada and abroad, there have always been people who have battled the abuses of racism and bigotry. Individual and collective acts of courage against institutionalized hate are important yet often overlooked part of Canadian history.

Analyzing our history can be difficult, but it can also inspire us to act.



Publications like the Biselector promoted anti-Asian Hate in BC

Canadians have also worked collectively to change discriminatory laws and policies and address the injustices of the past.

- In 1914, as a challenge to the “continuous voyage” policy, members of BC’s Sikh community chartered a steamship, the Komagata Maru to bring immigrants from India. The policy prevented anyone



from entering Canada who had not traveled straight from their country of origin. As no boats at the time travelled directly from India, this policy effectively prevented immigration from India. For two months, they resisted police efforts to forcibly remove them from the vessel and deport them. Only upon naval force did the ship depart from Vancouver with 321 of 376 passengers remaining on board.



After attempts to negotiate with government officials in London, England and Ottawa failed, members of BC's Sikh community chartered the Komagata Maru, hoping this would force government to change the policy that prevented British subjects from India from legally entering Canada.

- Japanese Canadians worked for over forty years to have the federal government recognize and redress the internment (link to the University of Ohio, http://www.csuohio.edu/art_photos/canada/canada.html) and deportation of Japanese Canadian citizens between 1942 and 1949. This campaign ended with the 1988 Redress Agreement (link to the Canadian Race Relations Foundation- <http://www.crr.ca/English/>) - which included a public apology and compensation to symbolize the enormous economic loss experienced by the Japanese Canadian community.

“Hate” and White Supremacy

“Hate” is more than an emotion. It may also involve acts of hostility, intimidation, or violence against people simply for being who they are. Certain acts of hatred are considered crimes.

In Canada, sections 318-320 of the Criminal Code of Canada make it illegal for people to promote genocide against identifiable groups or to willfully promote hatred against these groups in public. Section 718.2 of the Criminal Code makes it possible for judges to give longer sentences to those who commit criminal acts, like vandalism or assault, where it can be demonstrated that they were motivated by hate. Federal and provincial human rights codes prohibit broadcasting hate messages over the radio, television or over telephone lines.

The beliefs of the white supremacist movement cultivate hate. They centre around a myth that peoples of European descent are racially superior to people of color, Jews, gays and lesbians, and other minority populations. According to this movement, wherever people of different races and cultures must co-exist, there must be a “natural social hierarchy” of white rule. White supremacists also believe in a conspiracy that secret financial, industrial and political organizations, led by Jewish people, are responsible for undermining their movement. At the root of the conspiracy is age-old anti-Semitism. While hate-motivated acts are often associated with organized white supremacist groups, most are carried out by individuals not associated with such groups.

The laws and institutions of Canadian society that are designed to protect the rights of all citizens are contradictory to the declared goals of the white supremacist movement. Democracy itself is seen as a



barrier to establishing white supremacy. Changing the basic nature of government is therefore required. And for some, a matter of life and death. White supremacists pursue their goals through the use of violence, including terrorism, or by campaigning in the political mainstream or both.

Organizing efforts of the white supremacist movement are designed to demonstrate strength, support members and potential recruits, and strike fear in targeted communities. The signs and symbols of white supremacy—burning crosses, the Nazi swastika, the confederate flag—have meaning for both white supremacists and those communities that are the intended targets. Intimidating people of colour, religious minorities and gay and lesbian people prevents them from being full and active citizens.

Canada's history with organized hate groups dates as early as the 1830s, when the Grand Lodge of Orangemen of British North America - a pro-British, anti-Catholic secret society was founded. In the late 1870s, anti-Asian organizations such as the Working Man's Protection Association, the anti-Chinese Union and the Anti-Chinese League gave birth to the Asiatic Exclusion League of the early 1900s. These groups were key supporters of excluding Chinese and Japanese immigrants from entering Canada.

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was originally formed in the southern United States following the Civil War. From its inception, the Klan used intimidation, harassment, violence and terrorism to oppose the abolition of slavery and civil rights gained by African-Americans. Even when legal rights were granted, the Klan used violence to prevent people of colour from exercising their rights.

The Klan first took root in Canada during the 1920s with peak participation in the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, BC, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The "Kanadian" Klan adopted bigotry against Asians, French-Canadians and Catholics in addition to the traditional minority targets of their US counterparts.

The "Who's Who" of Hate Groups

The contemporary white supremacist movement includes groups and individuals who maintain the traditional forms of bigotry as well as new forms of organized hate. Much of the material circulated among today's white supremacists is drawn from hate groups of the past. We still find Ku Klux Klan chapters in Canada, the US and Europe, even though they are not as significant as in the past.



Mirroring the practices of Hitler's Nazis, raising an outstretched hand and saying "seig heil" ("hail to victory") is a Nazi salute still used by modern day racists.

Neo-Nazism emerged following World War II to continue what their predecessors could not. Neo-Nazis refer to groups or individuals who admire the Nazis (National Socialist German Workers Party), a fascist German political party led by Adolf Hitler. Neo-Nazis want to revive Nazism. They use the symbols of the original Nazis, such as the swastika or celebrating Hitler's birthday, to convey their beliefs.

Christian Identity refers to the pseudo-religion that tries to provide a biblical justification for hate. Christian Identity is considered racist because it distorts biblical passages to promote the view that western Europeans



(those originated from Anglo, Nordic, Celtic peoples) are the “true” Israelites or God’s “chosen people.” Unlike other religions, Identity preaches that skin colour, not belief or practice, determines an individual’s relationship with God. Believers of British Israel developed Identity into a racist theology. Identity followers believe that Jews are the offspring of Satan, people of colour are “subhuman” and racial separation and racial “purification” are obligations. Identity attempts to justify white rule in society and condemns anyone who would “weaken” the white race through inter-marriage or homosexuality.

Church of Jesus Christ Christian - Aryan Nations is the most notorious example of Christian Identity. Located at Hayden Lake, Idaho and led by “Pastor” Richard Butler, this so-called “church” has been the training ground for some of the most violent white supremacists, including “The Order”. In the early 1980s, members of “The Order” committed armed robbery and gunned down Jewish radio broadcaster Alan Berg in Denver, Colorado. Christian Identity literature is distributed through groups such as the British Israel World Federation, which has branches in Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto.

Holocaust Denial is the distortion of the memory and meaning of the Holocaust as away of cleansing the reputation of Adolf Hitler and Nazism. Deniers claim that the Nazis’ “Final Solution” was a plan to move Jews from Europe, not a plan for genocide. They dispute the existence of the gas chambers and the number of Jews killed. According to them, Jews and other groups were “casualties” of war, not targets of genocide. They hope that, as the Holocaust becomes a distant memory, more people may question the Holocaust and the atrocities of Nazism.

Deniers often claim to be legitimate historians or use the worthy pursuit of academic freedom to disguise the purpose of their activities - calling it “historical revisionism.” However, unlike legitimate historians, deniers use fabricated “evidence” to support their conclusions. Some may have outright associations with more overt white supremacists.

Ernst Zundel was one of Canada’s most prolific Holocaust deniers. Through Samisdat Publishing Zundel produced *Did Six Million Really Die?* and *The Hitler We Loved and Why*, distributed to over 14 countries. Zundel gained notoriety after being charged and convicted in 1985 for spreading false news. Although this conviction was overturned when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled the “false news” section of the Criminal Code to be unconstitutional, subsequent legal battles continued. A Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled in January, 2002 that Zundel and anyone working with him on his website were to “cease the discriminatory practice of communicating...messages...that are likely to expose a person or persons to hatred or contempt...” Zundel entered the United States under the visa waiver program. In February 2003 the Holocaust revisionist was arrested at his WearsValley home in the United States then deported to Canada where he is claiming refugee status on the grounds that if he is returned to Germany he will face fines and possible imprisonment, since the laws there for hate crimes are amongst the most stringent in the world. Zundel held permanent residence status in Canada for years. He was denied Canadian citizenship and thus remains a German citizen.

The California-based Institute for Historical Review (IHR) was formed by anti-Semite Willis Carto to present Holocaust denial as legitimate research. IHR’s *Journal of Historical Review* has featured articles by Canadians such as former BC Social Credit candidate John Ball and ex-*North Shore News* columnist Doug Collins.

Communities of higher learning have been targets for Holocaust denial. Bradley Smith’s Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH) has made a habit of purchasing ad space in university newspapers in the US. His ads claim that the Holocaust is a “myth” fostered by “special interest” groups.



Racist Skinheads

A new expression of white supremacy emerged in North America in the late 1980's that was unique for being entirely youth-led and youth-driven. In a single decade, racist skinheads have established themselves as one of the most violent segments of the white supremacist movement. The skinhead style, which encompasses **both** racist **and** anti-racist skins, is typified by its look. Men and women wear short cropped hair, narrow jeans or military pants and jackets, Doc Martens or other heavy boots, reflecting a working class appearance. Racist skinheads have adopted the creed of white supremacy and in particular find favour with neo-Nazism. Found in cities worldwide, violence has quickly followed wherever they have established themselves.



Originally a Norse symbol, the double hammers is currently used by violently racist skinheads known as Northern Hammerskins.

Racist skinheads have been particularly successful at exploiting the music industry and the Internet to communicate with their counterparts in other cities and attract new followers. White power concerts, which attract hundreds of followers, have been held in cities across Canada, the US and Europe. Record companies, bands, concerts and web sites feature the wares of racist skinheads from around the world.

Several Canadian cities have witnessed the establishment of racist skinhead groups and in these communities, the consequences have been tragic. Individuals linked to groups such as the Northern Hammerskins, the Final Solution Skins, the Aryan Resistance Movement (ARM) have been responsible for assaults, gay-bashing and murder.

- In 1990, Edmonton Final Solution Skins and Aryan Nations associate Dan Sims was convicted for attacking and blinding retired radio broadcaster Keith Rutherford.
- In June 1990, Kevin Dyer Lake, an ARM skinhead was found guilty of murdering Vietnamese student Tony Le in Toronto.
- In 1993, Sivarajah Vinasithamby, a Sri Lankan immigrant was beaten and left paralyzed after a white power concert in Toronto.
- In 1998, skinheads were charged in the death of Nirmal Singh Gill, a Sikh caretaker in a temple in Surrey, BC. Also in 1998, Montreal skinheads injured 30 people in Montreal bars. They now face 240 various criminal charges.

In 1995, the most deadly incident of domestic terrorism in the US was committed by individuals associated with the **Christian Patriot** movement - the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building (link to the Washington Post - <http://www.washpostco.com/index.html>) Oklahoma City. The bomb killed 31 people including twelve children, and injured hundreds of others.

Christian Patriots share the same core beliefs as other segments of the white supremacist movement but also incorporate some very specific American notions such as a literal and selective interpretation of the US constitution, citizenship and the right to bear weapons and form citizen militias. While mostly an American phenomenon, some Canadians have demonstrated sympathy and ties to so-called "patriots" in the US. In 1997, a weapons cache belonging to American Christian Patriot sympathizers was discovered in Smithers, BC.



Battling Bigots in the New Millennium

Despite our multicultural policies, human rights codes and hate crime provisions, bigotry and hate have not disappeared. Like other political movements, white supremacy has changed to better “fit” with the political and legal climate of the 1990s. Revamping its image, its strategies and some of its messages allows the white supremacist movement to attract new followers. Some groups still commit acts of violence against minorities. Others have found new ways to preach their hatred and avoid legal punishment. Through these strategies, white supremacists attempt to attract more “mainstream” Canadians.

There is a tradition of resisting hate in Canada that must be upheld. We have learned that there is no single way to eliminate racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and hate. No effort is too small. Effective and lasting responses to bigotry involve a broad cross-section of society.

Responding to all forms of bigotry, not simply those committed by organized hate groups, inoculates our society against white supremacist organizing. Challenging discrimination sets the tone for resisting more violent forms of racism.

The Toronto-based African Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC) continues to monitor and counter white supremacy in its institutional forms. In the Spring of 1997, ACLC provided submissions to the Inquiry into the Somalia Affair, where Canadian military personnel, some with white supremacist ties, were responsible for torturing and killing an African civilian youth, Shidane Arone. In 1998, ACLC and the legal firm Hinkson and Sachak conducted research to investigate the practice of “racial profiling” by Canadian Customs officials. They found that passengers of African descent were eight times more likely to have their luggage searched than white passengers.

Communities that are victimized by hate-motivated violence or hate promotion can respond by:

1. Increasing public awareness of hate groups and larger systems of discrimination. Public events can symbolize a community’s rejection of bigotry and convey their commitment to multiculturalism and human rights. Speaking out against racism and bigotry is a right and a democratic duty.

- In 1998, more than 2000 secondary students from Burnaby South Secondary School in Burnaby, BC participated in a ribbon campaign commemorating the beating death of Nirmal Singh Gill, an elderly Sikh caretaker from Surrey, BC.
- In 1998, the Scarborough Youth Council’s “Breaking Down Barriers” conference brought young people together to challenge discrimination and hate violence. This event was a response to the brutal hate motivated murder of Matthew Shephard, a gay college student in Laramie, Wyoming.

2. Supporting those directly victimized by hate activity. An attack on one member of the community affects the safety of the entire community. Responding to hate violence means not allowing victims to remain isolated, unprotected, and individually responsible for dealing with hate groups.

- In 1990, when Canadian Aryan Nations leader Terry Long and Ray Bradley held a national meeting of white supremacists called “Aryan Fest”, they used a burning cross, swastika flag and other white supremacist symbols to mark the occasion for the entire community of Provost, Alberta. The community as a whole responded. Angry citizens protested the event, elementary and secondary students from Provost Public School dressed in black as silent protest, and individual Albertans filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission.



3. Reporting hate activity and seeking assistance from institutions and law enforcement.

While the law cannot eliminate hate, reporting incidents and using the law to the fullest extent does impair the racist movement and provides avenues of justice for victims of hate.

Reporting white supremacists to law enforcement can sometimes be difficult. In BC, toll-free community service phone lines were established in 1997 to encourage citizens to report hate activity. The 24-hour Bash Line was introduced to receive reports and assist victims of gay-bashing. The BC Hate Crimes team also operates a line for reporting incidents of hate promotion or hate motivated violence.

Institutions can also respond to local incidents of “cyberhate” - the use of computer technology as a tool to organize racists and spread white supremacist propaganda (link to Media Awareness Network, “Challenging Hate Online” - <http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/internet/hintro.htm>). The arrival and expansion of the Internet into libraries, schools and homes allows hate groups to reach millions of people daily and because it is largely unregulated, the Internet allows them to bypass national boundaries and any restrictions on hate material. Public institutions providing Internet access, such as libraries, schools and post-secondary institutions, have developed anti-harassment policies or “appropriate-use” policies which would prevent the use of public services for promoting hate.

4. Organizing against racist money-making.

Various segments of the white supremacist movement try and support their racist activities through the sale and marketing of racist paraphernalia, Holocaust Denial material, racist literature, White Power music, etc.

- In 1997, when the town’s community paper and local school district learned that Oliver, BC-based

Fairview Technology Centre (FTC), provided Internet service to a number of racist websites including Freedom Site and Skin Net, they cancelled their accounts. This, along with anti-racism rallies by Oliver citizens sent a clear message to FTC operator Bernard Klatt that supporting white supremacy is not good business.

5. **Rejecting racist politics.** White supremacists have tried to mainstream racism by running for public office. For example, ex-Klansman David Duke’s 1992 campaigned using an “anti-welfare” message. Though he didn’t win, he did receive approximately 52% of the white vote. Today, politicians in Europe, Australia and Canada use anti-immigrant rhetoric and scapegoating of minorities as a way of getting votes; they must be held accountable. Citizens speaking out against and exposing racist political messages is one way of ensuring that blaming minorities does not become a “winning” electoral strategy.

What to do when

.....you find racist or hate-motivated graffiti or hate literature (e.g. swastikas or racist slurs on public property)

Record all incidents (location, time, date and description) and report each incident to the police and to the appropriate authorities responsible for the property where the vandalism or the hate literature distribution occurred. If possible, photograph graffiti and keep copies of the literature. Ask for the immediate removal of the graffiti or get permission to do it yourself. Some municipal governments and business associations have begun graffiti removal programs. Consult any in your area.



...you encounter intimidation, violence, or threats of violence

Call for emergency police assistance and ensure the victim(s)' safety and your own. Do not further endanger yourself or others if you are outnumbered. Report the incident to the police and describe what happened, what the attackers looked like, any identifying features and any use of slurs or expressions of hatred. (tatoos, distinctive clothing or shoes)

...you suspect an organized hate group is meeting or is holding a white power concert in your area.

Consult local human rights groups and develop a strategy before the event. Voice your opposition to the facility owners, managers and employee groups about the event and ask them to reconsider the use of their facilities for racist purposes. Organize an anti-racist alternative to their event.

Getting More On-Line Information on Hate

Developing an understanding of local incidents of hate requires putting it within a national and international context. Here are just a few of the valuable resources available on the web on white supremacy, religious bigotry, discrimination, and homophobia.

Organization	Website address	Description/Location/Expertise
Anti Defamation League	http://www.adl.org	New-York based with offices across the US; conducts research and public education on white supremacy; vast number of publications on line, including "hate filter" for the Internet.
Canadian Jewish Congress	http://www.cjc.ca	Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina and Vancouver offices; oldest, largest, advocacy group for Canada's Jewish community; leader in seeking the prosecution of Nazi war criminals in Canada and in pursuing legal mechanisms for responding to hate and white supremacy.
Centre for New Communities	http://www.newcomm.org	Chicago-based; hub of research and community organizing against white supremacists in the American Mid-West. CNC has developed a particular expertise in rural and faith-based community responses to hate.
Education and Vigilance Network	http://www.come.to/evn	Pennsylvania-based; led by Floyd Cochran, ex-communications officer for the Aryan Nations. EVN liaises with anti-racism activists in the north-eastern US.
Hatewatch	http://www.hatewatch.org	Massachusetts-based; valuable links to academic bodies in the US dedicated to studying racism, ethnic conflict, white supremacy in its contemporary forms.



League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada	http://www.bnaibrith.ca	A national organization with offices in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Calgary, the League accomplishes its goals through legal/legislative initiatives, intercultural dialogue, community coalitions and educational programming. The organization is dedicated to combating antisemitism, racism and bigotry. Working in association with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Canadian distributor of ADL educational materials, the League monitors and documents the activities of hate groups in Canada, records reported hate incidents and provides training programs and resource materials in the areas of human rights, racism, multiculturalism and anti-hate initiatives.
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights	http://www.nnirr.org	Oakland-based; national coalition of immigrant and refugee rights advocacy groups; great on-line source for analysis of the anti-immigrant movement in the US and model political and educational responses to rabid anti immigration sentiment.
Media Awareness Network	http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/internet/hintro.htm	Ottawa based; Mnet provides media education in the home, school and community. "Challenging Hate On-Line" provides resources to parents and teachers to help young people deal with online hate.
Nizkor	http://www.nizkor.org	Award-winning site by BC-native Ken MacVay; best source of on-line information on the Holocaust and Holocaust denial.
Searchlight	http://www.s-light.demon.co.uk	London-based; most reliable and up-to-date resource on white supremacist activity in the UK and Europe.
Southern Institute for Education and Research	http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/indexbackupmn.html	Louisiana-based; anti-bigotry research and education organization; great source for on-line teachers' guides, study guides, and resources specific to racism in the American south.

Originally developed by the Westcoast Coalition for Human Dignity (WCHD), for the **Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF)**, the material for this report was adapted from WCHD's 1997 publication, **Choose Dignity, A Kit for Fighting Hate**.

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