



National Collaborating Centre  
for Determinants of Health

Centre de collaboration nationale  
des déterminants de la santé

# PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION TO ADDRESS WHITENESS: A CURATED LIST

Understanding Whiteness is an important part of responding to issues related to race and racism. Whiteness refers to practices, policies and perspectives that create and enable the dominance of White people and White systems, and the perceived neutrality and invisibility of this dominance. By paying attention to Whiteness, public health practitioners, policy-makers and leaders can work towards disrupting White supremacy within public health systems and institutions, leading to more equitable, anti-racist approaches and practices.

The current national and global political context has shown increased public awareness and interest in anti-racism in light of events such as the Wet'suwet'en pipeline protests across Canada, the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota and subsequent Black Lives Matter demonstrations around the world, the rise in anti-Asian racism following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the death of Joyce Echaquan following racist treatment by health care providers in Quebec. These events represent centuries of racial colonial violence, as well as resistance to that oppression.

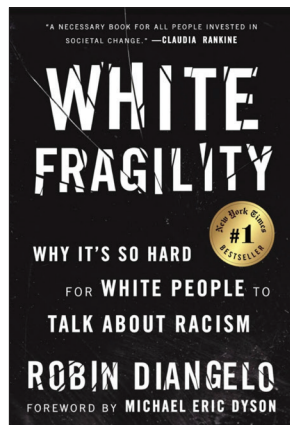
Recognizing the need to respond to systemic racism and Whiteness in Canadian public health systems, we at the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health are offering this curated list of tools and resources to support public health practitioners and organizations to understand and act against Whiteness and racism. This list provides resources for fostering a deeper understanding of Whiteness in relation to health equity and explores concepts described in *Let's Talk: Whiteness and health equity*.<sup>1</sup>

However, there are significant gaps in the literature on undoing Whiteness. There is an overemphasis on Whiteness as an affective concept, seen in the prevalence of resources that promote self-reflection without fully engaging with Whiteness as a structural phenomenon. In particular, there are limited resources specific to Whiteness in a Canadian health context; therefore, the list includes articles from a diversity of sectors and policy environments that are relevant for public health. Considering there are few resources available that examine Indigenous Peoples and Whiteness specifically, this list includes resources that discuss Indigenous Peoples and settler colonialism.

The curated list of resources is organized under four broad overlapping approaches related to undoing Whiteness: **unlearning Whiteness, disrupting institutional Whiteness, promoting racial justice in communities and re-envisioning policy to address racial inequities.**

## UNLEARNING WHITENESS

Unlearning Whiteness is a crucial step in developing the knowledge and skill to identify how Whiteness is manifest at the individual, institutional and systemic levels.



### White fragility: Why it's so hard for White people to talk about racism

DiAngelo R. [2018].

This book examines the feelings, behaviours, claims and assumptions made by White people when avoiding, denying and refuting racism and White supremacy.<sup>2</sup>

Written from the perspective of a White American woman, the author uses examples from her experience as a diversity trainer to reveal the ways in which White fragility shows up and how it can be managed. A transformative racial paradigm is offered to inform how White people can explore racism, including their own racial identity and privilege, while managing their fragility. A list of resources is provided for further learning.

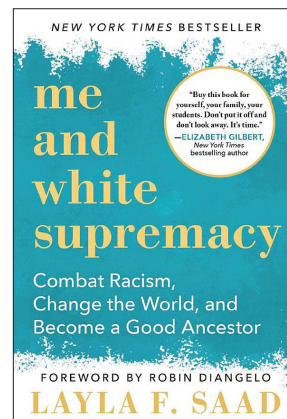


### Dr. Robin DiAngelo discusses 'White fragility'

DiAngelo R. [2018].

This video<sup>3</sup> is from the book launch

for *White fragility: Why it's so hard for White people to talk about racism*. DiAngelo uses humour, readings from her book and examples from her first-hand experiences to demonstrate how White fragility manifests in the feelings, behaviours and assumptions of White people when encountering issues of racism.

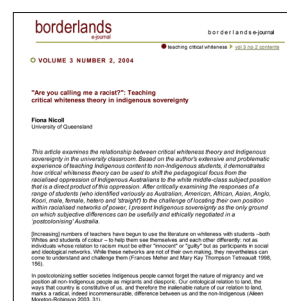


### Me and White supremacy: Combat racism, change the world, and become a good ancestor

Saad L.F. [2020].

This educational, self-reflection tool for building capacity around anti-racism was created by an East African, Arab, British, Black, Muslim woman for anyone

who holds White privilege.<sup>4</sup> It consists of a 28-day challenge with weekly segments that build on each other sequentially. Topics include behaviours that support White supremacy, the effects of racism on people of colour, allyship and tips for moving towards anti-racism. Each section includes definitions, examples and prompts for reflective journaling. The author provides suggestions for using this workbook in a group setting and offers additional resources for ongoing learning.

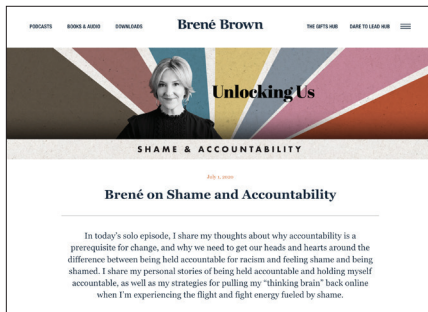


### "Are you calling me a racist?": Teaching critical Whiteness theory in Indigenous sovereignty

Nicoll F. [2004].

Set in an Australian university context, a White, middle-

class woman shares lessons learned for teaching Indigenous content to non-Indigenous students.<sup>5</sup> Critical Whiteness theory is used to shift the gaze from "Aboriginal problems" to the "problem of Whiteness" by focusing on reverse racism, Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships, and why Indigenous claims to place and sovereignty are unsettling for White people. The author reveals how Whiteness is a political force that erodes Aboriginal peoples' control of land.



## On shame and accountability

Brown B. [2020].

In this podcast, Brené Brown discusses the nature of White

peoples' shame and behavioural reactions when confronted with issues related to racism.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on 15 years of research focused on understanding the difference between shame and guilt, Brown unpacks the reasons White people experience shame when dealing with racism, as well as the impacts of shame such as destructive behaviour and lack of accountability. Tips are provided for improving shame resilience, moving towards accountability and taking action to address racism.

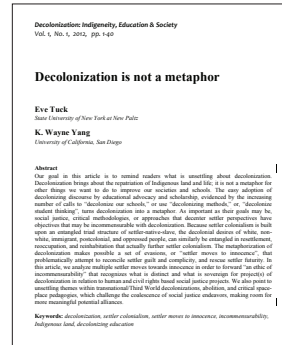


## Are you supporting White supremacy?

Dutt-Ballerstadt R. [2018].

The author describes a number of acts used by individuals in academic settings that contribute to a culture of White supremacy.<sup>7</sup>

Whether overt or covert, individuals commonly promote White supremacy through decisions on who is hired, who is tenured and promoted, whose scholarship is (de)valued, who receives campus awards for teaching and service, whose voices are heard, whose tone and ideas are policed, and who is called out for not being "civil" — a coded word for speaking against the status quo of White privilege. These acts are presented as a checklist of 15 "troubles" to help individuals determine if and how they may be contributing to White supremacy.

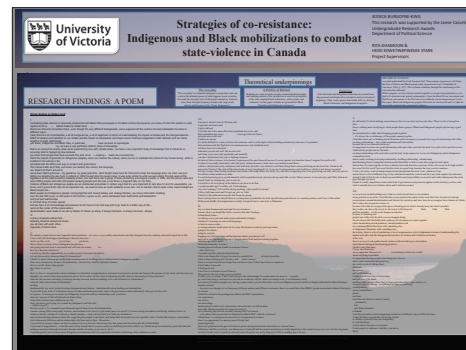


## Decolonization is not a metaphor

Tuck E, Yang KW. [2012].

This paper discusses how the language of "decolonization" is often appropriated by settlers as a metaphor for social

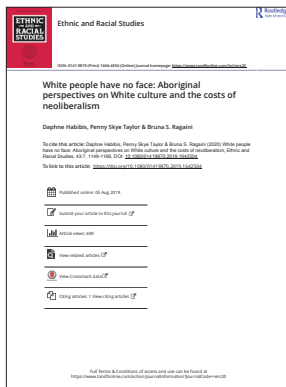
justice work not specific to Indigenous oppression — rather than a process about repatriation of Indigenous land and life.<sup>8</sup> The authors work through six tactics used by settlers to reconcile their guilt: settler nativism, fantasizing adoption, colonial equivocation, conscientization, at risk-ing/asterisk-ing Indigenous Peoples, and reoccupation and urban homesteading. These "settler moves to innocence" are highlighted to illustrate how settler goals are often incommensurable with the true aim of decolonization and Indigenous Peoples' social justice agendas.



## Strategies of co-resistance: Indigenous and Black mobilizations to combat state-violence in Canada

Burgoyne-King J. [2020].

This poster presents research findings from a study on Black and Indigenous efforts to address racism.<sup>9</sup> The findings are presented in the form of a poem that highlights interconnections between Indigenous and Black Peoples' struggles against state violence and climate change. The author writes about the importance of bringing people together in good relationship as a form of resistance to colonialism and capitalism. They also critique colonialism and Whiteness while celebrating the arts as a pathway to liberation.

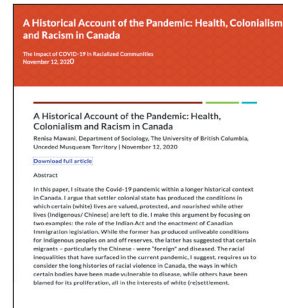


### White people have no face: Aboriginal perspectives on White culture and the costs of neoliberalism

*Habibis D, Taylor PS, Ragaini BS. [2020].*

This paper presents findings from a study on Aboriginal peoples' perspectives

of White Australian values and behaviours.<sup>10</sup> Aboriginal respondents reported believing Australians live in ways that are materialistic and individualistic and go "against nature" at an excessive cost to the environment and society. While Aboriginal respondents felt a sense of connection and mutual reciprocity to each other and to their country, they felt non-Aboriginal people suffer from poorer social connection even though they have economic advantage. Many recognized that White hegemony negatively impacts both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. These findings trouble the assumption that White hegemony only negatively affects Aboriginal peoples and indicate that reconciliation requires a reset in the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Australians.



### A historical account of the pandemic: Health, colonialism and racism in Canada

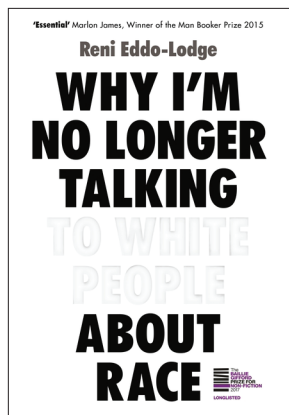
*Mawani R. [2020].*

This paper examines settler colonialism and structural

racism in the context of COVID-19 in British Columbia.<sup>11</sup> The author explores the relationship between Whiteness, immigration, racism and disease control through the structural violence perpetrated on Indigenous Peoples and Chinese people in Canada. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed how settler colonialism and state-sanctioned racism produce racial inequalities by creating the conditions in which some lives are valued and protected from disease while others are devastated from racial stereotyping and complications of disease due to racism.

## DISRUPTING INSTITUTIONAL WHITENESS

Understanding and addressing the Whiteness in our own institutions is an important first step. A critical Whiteness approach to disrupting Whiteness within public health systems and institutions can lead to more equitable, anti-racist approaches and actions.

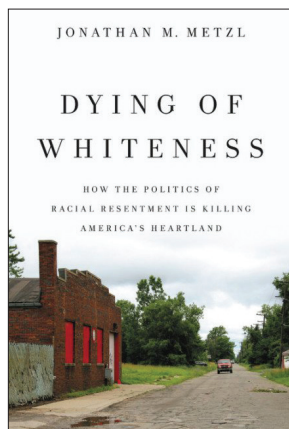


### Why I'm no longer talking to White people about race

Eddo-Lodge R. [2017].

In this book, the author expands upon their 2014 blog post of the same name, which they wrote after being continuously confronted with White fragility when speaking to White people

about racism.<sup>12</sup> Eddo-Lodge draws on research, racist events in the United Kingdom and their personal experience as a Black woman to unpack Whiteness, White fragility and racism in society. Set in a British context, the book includes a discussion on the history of Black slavery and racism, contemporary systemic racism, White fragility, the “fear of a Black planet,” colour blindness, self-censorship and how power and White privilege are used to prove racialized people wrong and maintain the status quo.



### Dying of Whiteness: How the politics of racial resentment is killing America's heartland

Metzl JM. [2020].

This book draws on three American public policy case studies to demonstrate how Whiteness is a political and economic system that

supports White racial resentment while simultaneously contributing to poorer health outcomes for White people.<sup>13</sup> The case studies are Tennessee's blocking of the state's participation in public health policy for more affordable health care and the subsequent impact on health outcomes, Kansas's economic experiment with the largest income tax cut in state history and its impact on schools, and Missouri's pro-gun laws allowing citizens to carry concealed weapons and the impact on gun-related deaths. Using a population health data approach, the author examines these case studies to show how politically conservative White Americans tend to defend racist policies even though they experience negative health effects as a result of those policies.



### Tackling racism as a “wicked” public health problem: Enabling allies in anti-racism praxis

Carter H, Griffiths D. [2018].

Coming from a public health background, the authors propose an anti-racism praxis framework to educate

public health practitioners on how to stand in solidarity with people targeted by racism.<sup>14</sup> The praxis includes five core elements: reflexive relational praxis, structural power analysis, sociopolitical education, monitoring and evaluation, and systems change approaches. Using a systems change approach, the proposed framework identifies seven stages of systems change and five elements of a system for addressing racism in public health systems.



**Growing sense of social status threat and concomitant deaths of despair among Whites**

Siddiqi A, Sod-Erdene O, Hamilton D, McMillan, Cottom T, Darity W Jr. [2019].

This paper uses administrative and survey

data to examine trends in mortality of White people in the United States.<sup>15</sup> The authors conducted a county-level fixed effects model to figure out whether changes in the Republican share of voters, as a marker of perception of social status threat, were associated with changes in working-age White mortality. White mortality is rising in lower economic brackets and also occurring among higher education brackets. The authors argue that this population health phenomenon is caused by a perceived decline in relative group status on the part of White people, despite no loss in relative group position.



**The coin model of privilege and critical allyship: Implications for health**

Nixon SA. [2019].

Based on an understanding of social structures as the root cause of health inequities, the author offers the Coin Model to explain how social structures

produce unearned advantage and disadvantage.<sup>17</sup> Using an intersectional approach, the model illustrates how systems of inequality, conceptualized as coins, interact with each other to produce patterns of privilege and oppression. The author describes principles for practicing critical allyship for action to address unjust structures that produce health inequities.



**Troubling good intentions**

de Leeuw S, Greenwood M, Lindsay N. [2013].

This paper uses examples from three universities in British Columbia to examine “decolonizing” policies and practices, such as Indigenous student and faculty recruitment.<sup>16</sup> Finding

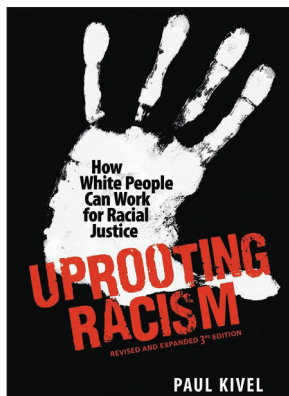
limited success resulting from Aboriginal Strategic/Service Plans, the authors question the impact of “good intentions” when policies and strategies are rushed, when ideas about decolonizing spaces are premised on completing a goal and when colonial institutions do not examine their power. The authors conclude that destabilizing normative settler colonialism requires pushback against good intentions manifest in policies and practices.





## PROMOTING RACIAL JUSTICE IN COMMUNITIES

Public health organizations must work in partnership with, take direction from and respect the perspectives of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities when challenging Whiteness in public health institutions.

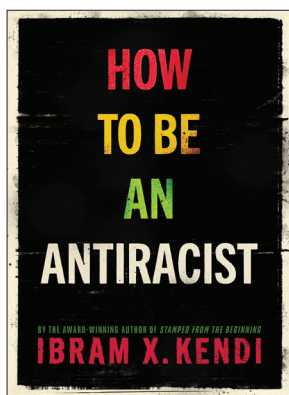


### Uprooting racism: How White people can work for racial justice

Kivel P. [2011].

This book provides an in-depth explanation and historical context of Whiteness, including topics such as White denial and

invisibility, White privilege and benefits, and the costs of Whiteness to White people and BIPOC.<sup>20</sup> The author uses an intersectional lens to compare racism to other forms of discrimination such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and homophobia, as well as to explore racism towards different racialized groups. With a focus on a White American audience, the author discusses what it means to be an ally and provides practical strategies for interrupting racism at an institutional level.

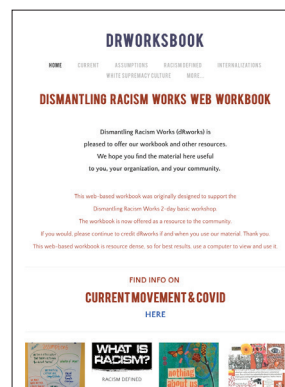


### How to be an antiracist

Kendi IX. [2019].

The author argues there is no neutral or “not racist” space when it comes to racism, which can be seen when examining definitions of opposite concepts such as racist vs. anti-racist

or assimilationist vs. segregationist.<sup>21</sup> Kendi intermingles history, research and examples from his own personal growth journey in moving toward becoming an anti-racist. The author focuses on how changing racist policy is the key to begin changing the landscape of racism in the United States.

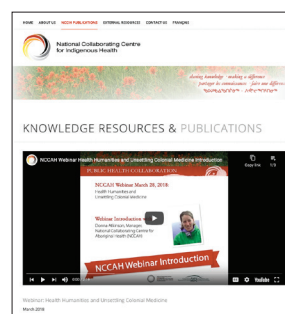


### Dismantling Racism Works web workbook

*Dismantling Racism Works [dRworks].* [2021].

Based on the anti-racism work of many authors, this web-based workbook is the cumulation of 15 years of experience and development

in helping organizations improve their anti-racist approach.<sup>22</sup> The workbook aims to support people in dismantling racism by examining topics such as the history of racism, tools for analysis and tools for action. A particularly insightful section explores how to make White supremacy culture visible through understanding and naming organizational behaviour.



### Health humanities and unsettling colonial medicine

*de Leeuw S, Aldred T.* [2018].

In this webinar, an Indigenous physician and a non-Indigenous scholar share stories of anti-

Indigenous racism, the use of humanities- and arts-based approaches to teach and learn about Indigenous Peoples, and ways to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and ceremony into the health care system.<sup>23</sup> The webinar participants provide a wide range of examples of contemporary Indigenous artists whose works inform Indigenous perspectives and can influence health care practitioners. The presenters provide reflections on how people who live with extraordinary White privilege and benefit from settler colonialism can remain self-critical and take on the burden of anti-Indigenous racism.



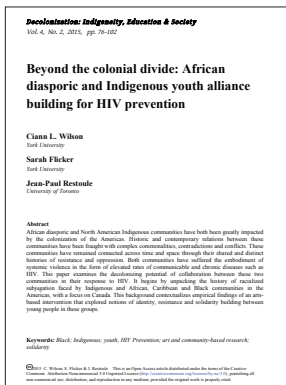


### Indigenous ally toolkit

Swiftwolfe D. [2019].

This resource provides definitions of different roles individuals can play in the collective experience of addressing anti-Indigenous racism, from the role of ally to coresister.<sup>24</sup> The toolkit outlines three steps to becoming an Indigenous ally: asking oneself questions about

motivations for allyship, educating oneself about the history of Indigenous Peoples and taking action. Helpful examples of ally behaviours, terms to use and not use as an ally, and basic stereotypes to avoid are provided.

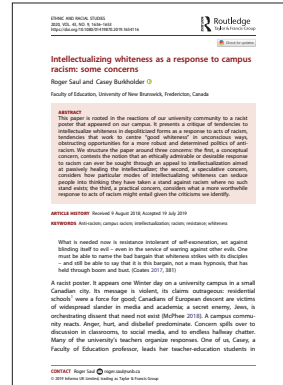


### Beyond the colonial divide: African diasporic and Indigenous youth alliance building for HIV prevention

Wilson CL, Flicker S, Restoule JP. [2015].

This paper shares the findings of an arts-based intervention that uses

digital storytelling, talking circles and murals with Black and Indigenous youth in the context of sexual health, HIV research and health promotion.<sup>25</sup> The exploration of the two groups' different experiences in relation to White supremacy and colonialism (stolen land, stolen bodies) opened the door to mutual understanding of their unique histories of oppression and resistance. This project provides an example for understanding the complexities and tensions in working toward collaboration and solidarity between Black and Indigenous youth.



### Intellectualizing Whiteness as a response to campus racism: Some concerns

Saul R, Burkholder C. [2020]

This paper was written in response to the reactions of faculty and students to a racist poster appearing on a Canadian university

campus.<sup>26</sup> The authors work through concerns in critiquing tendencies to intellectualize Whiteness in a depoliticalized way that centres “good Whiteness” rather than actually taking a stand against racism. More worthwhile responses to racism are proposed, such as positioning the university as the learner in the context of civic and community-based partnerships and engaging in anti-racism that does not focus solely on confession and self-exoneration.

## RE-ENVISIONING POLICY

Public policy processes must be disconnected from White supremacist values, culture and actions for it to be possible to re-envision equitable and just models of decision-making and policy development.

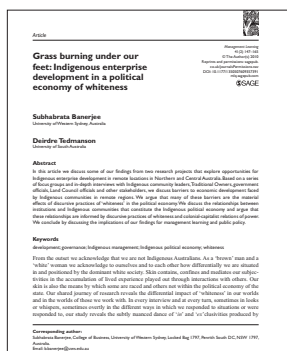


### [The end of diversity](#)

Walcott R. [2019].

This paper critiques the re-emergence of diversity as a discredited practice, idea or process that can achieve the types of social, cultural, political and economic

change that could nullify and void racism.<sup>27</sup> The author argues that Whiteness is the barrier that must be unmade for it to be possible to imagine other ways of organizing human life. A decolonial future is proposed that would include structural change and transformative human understanding and relations by exploring new conceptions of what it means to be a human being.



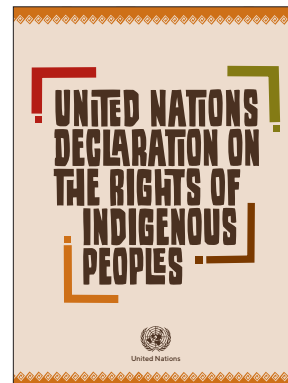
### [Grass burning under our feet: Indigenous enterprise development in a political economy of Whiteness](#)

Banerjee S, Tedmanson D. [2010].

Written in an Australian political economic context,

this paper shows how discourses of Whiteness shape public policy to negatively affect Indigenous Peoples' material lives.<sup>28</sup> The authors describe how discourses such as

diversity and affirmative action obscure how inequities are created by Whiteness. They further show how the Whiteness of representation and governance processes used by governments impede Indigenous sovereignty and appropriate Indigenous lands, among other negative effects. The resource also provides insights for resisting Whiteness in organizational and government processes.



### [United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

United Nations. [2007].

The United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007 to ensure the survival, dignity and

well-being of Indigenous Peoples around the world.<sup>29</sup> With a preamble and 46 articles outlining basic individual and collective human rights, the entire content of UNDRIP is meant to improve Indigenous Peoples' health and well-being through exercising Indigenous rights to self-determination and participation in decision-making on matters of land, resources, cultures, languages and safety. Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada<sup>30</sup> and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls<sup>31</sup> recommended Canada use UNDRIP as the framework for reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.



## Whiteness as policy: Reconstructing racial privilege through school choice

*Diem S, Hawkman AM.*  
[2018].

The authors show how  
American education policy  
tends to be capitalist,  
market based and colour

blind, which protects and perpetuates White supremacy.<sup>32</sup> Even when education policy-makers have good intentions to increase racial diversity, policies that ignore or downplay racial discrimination end up perpetuating racial segregation and limiting choice for racialized and low-income families. Strategies to increase racial equity in education include paying attention to White supremacy in policy development, involving racialized people in decision-making, implementing anti-racist teacher education programs and educating White students about race and White supremacy. Asking critical questions can help to address the Whiteness of policy, such as what is driving policy, who benefits and who is disadvantaged, and how does policy affect choice?



## The politics of data: Uncovering Whiteness in conventional social policy and social work research

*Curry-Stevens A, Cross-  
Hemmer A, Maher N, Meier J.*  
[2011].

Although policy research is considered to be objective and neutral, it is often infused with colour blindness and White centrism.<sup>33</sup> This bias may show up through population undercounts, lack of consideration of unique characteristics of racialized populations, inaccurate coding and analysis of data, and data collection methods that

minimize experiences of communities of colour. The lack of attention to racism within survey design and how questions on racial identity are asked, for example, contribute to the Whiteness of data. Considerations for addressing Whiteness in policy research include centring voices of communities of colour in data collection tools and methods, particularly in the formation of racial identity questions.



## The RIPPLES of meaningful involvement: A framework for meaningfully involving Indigenous Peoples in health policy decision- making

*Fridkin A, Browne AJ, Dion  
Stout MK.* [2019].

Recognizing the necessity  
of involving Indigenous

Peoples in health policy and the frequent lack of clarity on what involvement should look like, this paper describes common challenges and steps that can be taken to foster more meaningful involvement.<sup>34</sup> Findings from a qualitative study are used to show how colonial dynamics and power imbalances play out at health policy decision-making tables, including how Indigenous Peoples are often silenced and excluded through processes of inclusion. The authors offer a framework for meaningfully involving Indigenous Peoples that can assist public health practitioners, researchers and policy actors in strengthening processes of involvement.

## PODCASTS

- Seeing White. Biewen J. [2017].<sup>35</sup>
- Intersectionality matters! Crenshaw K. [2018-present].<sup>36</sup>
- The secret life of Canada. Bowen LS, Johnson F. [2018-present].<sup>37</sup>
- All my relations. Wilbur M, Keene A. [2019-present].<sup>38</sup>
- Media Indigena. Harp, R. [2016-present].<sup>39</sup>

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