

# CLARA CLARE: DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

## Focus Questions

What are the definitions of racism and discrimination? How did Indigenous children like Clara (or Leah or Mike if you are using this lesson plan with their stories) experience racism and discrimination? What can we do to ensure racism and discrimination are not tolerated in our schools, communities and country? What can we do to contribute toward ending discrimination and racism for Indigenous children in Canada?

## Time

90 minutes

## Grade Level

7-9

## Learning Goals

- Explain the difference between racism and discrimination.
- Identify some ways in which Indigenous children like Clara (or Leah or Mike) were discriminated against in their life, and specifically at school.
- Interpret what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms say about discrimination and identify which of Clara's human rights were denied.
- Develop personal, classroom or school-wide action plans to combat discrimination and racism.
- Support former residential school students and their descendants who have not yet seen justice for their losses.

## Introduction

When we think about 'racism', most of us conjure up interactions between people. The concept of racism is commonly understood or taken up in public as being strictly about personal behaviour rather than about how institutions maintain racist and discriminatory practices through the implementation of policies, practices and programs.

This includes how inequities in society are rooted in the stratification of people on the basis of race. The systemic nature of this racism is that it permeates all aspects of society in insidious ways that we may not even be aware of and affects how Indigenous people are treated and can participate in cultural, economic, social, political and educational life.

It also affects the culture, norms, values and beliefs of non-Indigenous people, which in turn reinforces the institutions that shape all our lives through the maintenance of the status quo. It is no longer legally acceptable in Canada to segregate students in a school based on their race, however, this was a colonial practice that occurred in residential schools all across the country, such as at the All Hallows Girls School in Yale, B.C.

## Lesson Implementation

### Minds on

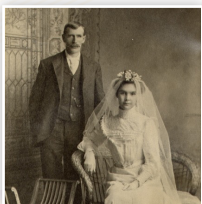
It is not easy to have a conversation about racism. It requires openness, honesty, and a safe environment in which to share ideas. An honest conversation on any topic requires first understanding the language we are using. Before starting the lesson, review your understanding of the difference between discrimination and racism. We recommend Celeste Headlee's overview available [here](#).

Divide your class into groups of four students. Give half of the groups a piece of paper with the word "racism" written in the center, and the other half a piece of paper with the word "discrimination". Ask students to write down words or sentences on their piece of paper describing what they believe the term means. Have students discuss their word within their group to try to arrive at a consensus about what the term means. Have each group choose one student to share their ideas with the class.

Draw a Venn diagram on the board with the word "racism" in the left-hand circle and the word "discrimination" in the right hand circle.

Write down the key points in the Venn Diagram as students present their group's ideas, placing common points in the middle so that students can ascertain similarities and differences between these two concepts.

As a group you should arrive at the following: the simplest explanation for the difference between racism and discrimination is that racism is a negative and judgmental thought whereas discrimination is an action taken on that thought that is intended to hurt someone in some way. Some people describe racism as prejudice + power. Ask students:



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## Materials

- Scrap paper
- Writing materials
- Board to write on
- Clara's Biography Card
- Clara's story on the [Paths to Reconciliation](#) website\*, available in the following formats:
  - Photos of Clara Clare
  - Audio interviews
  - Photos of All Hallows school

\*Note: to access survivor stories, click on "Legend," then "Survivor Stories," and choose a survivor from the map view.

## Connection to the Canadian Geography Framework

### Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Spatial significance
- Interrelationships
- Geographic perspective

### Inquiry Process

- Ask geographic questions
- Acquire geographic resources
- Interpret and analyze
- Evaluate and draw conclusions
- Reflect and respond

### Geospatial Skills

- Spatial representations

What do you think this statement means? Accept all answers. Explain that it refers to the domination of a person or group of people over other people in a racist system.

Explain to students that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms exists to discourage Canadians from being biased, racist or discriminatory by making racial and discriminatory actions illegal. In the Charter, under the heading of "Equality Rights", read out the following:

15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Explain that there are also international laws intended to prevent racism and discrimination, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Read out the following:

### Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination

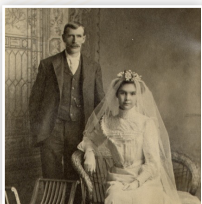
The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or another status.

Note for students that these anti-discrimination laws only came into practice in 1948 (UDHR) and 1982 (Charter) respectively, which is not that long ago. Consider sharing with students the [Illustrated version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).

Explain to students that a person (or a system) can be both racist and discriminatory without many people even being aware of it. In addition, being aware of our own biases does not make it any simpler to overcome them. Therefore, you must assume at all times that unconscious bias is influencing your decisions and you must create ways to avoid indulging those biases and behaving in a discriminatory way.

Two questions we can ask ourselves to determine whether an idea is racist or an action is discriminatory are: Is it possible that I have preconceived notions or ideas about this person or group of people that are based on race alone? Would it cause harm, damage or trauma to this person or group in any way if this thought was acted upon?

Conclude by explaining that when someone expresses a racist idea or discriminates against someone or a group of people on the basis of their race, they are actively contributing and strengthening an existing system of oppression that punishes people based on their race. For example, calling Indigenous people "Indians," which is a derogatory word, may not be as severe as punishing Indigenous youth



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for speaking their language, but it is racist nevertheless and reinforces the racist system that keeps Indigenous people down.

Lastly, acknowledge that we are all biased and that we probably all make assumptions about people based on race, religion, gender or other factors, whether we realize it or not.

Racism and discrimination are terrible things but students need to feel comfortable expressing their prejudices in the context of such a discussion without being chastised for having them so that we can work together to identify them, unpack them and move forward. The purpose discussing racism is to enlighten and inform.

### Action

Explain that you will be reading and/or listening to Clara's life story. Students should focus on identifying examples of racism and discrimination that Clara and other First Nations, Métis and Inuit children could have experienced in residential schools (noting the differences between ideas or thoughts people had at that time about Indigenous people compared to actions that directly impacted Clara's life and the lives of many other Indigenous children).

It is worth noting for students that Clara's story takes place around the turn of the last century (around 1900), and therefore before the existence of anti-discrimination laws in Canada, which is something for them to think about during the exercise.

Review Clara's story using the short story on the [Paths to Reconciliation](#) website and the Clara's Biography card. Note: see the Sources and Additional Resources section for more documents about Clara's life.

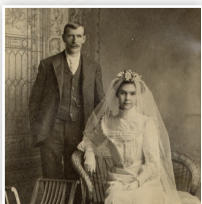
Have students discuss the material within their small groups and report back to the class with a shared understanding. A representative for each group will contribute one idea at a time to a collective list that you will write on the board at the front of the class.

Ask students to compare photographs of the All Hallows pupils (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) circa 1901. Ask them to identify and explain the similarities and differences between these photographs. Write their answers on the board.

Ask students: Did the white girls and Indigenous girls wear the same clothing? Did they live in the same spaces and do the same things? Why were the white and Indigenous girls separate at the school? What did Clara herself have to say about the fact that Indigenous girls and white girls were kept totally separate? Why do you think Clara responded this way? What are some of the underlying racist ideas or thoughts about Indigenous people that white (European) people had at that time to result in two such different photos of the Indigenous and white girls at the school at the same time?

Some possible ideas could include:

- They believed that the best thing for Indigenous children was to send them to a school far away from their families and communities because they had



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the misguided belief that Indigenous people could not properly care for their children and would interfere in their assimilation in British colonial society (“white man’s ways” as Clara refers to it).

- They believed that the best thing for Indigenous children was to teach them Christian beliefs from a very young age instead of their traditional beliefs so those children could be saved and considered “civilized” or even “human” because of a misguided belief that Indigenous people were inferior to white people.
- They believed that the best thing for Indigenous children was to school them in British colonial ways because of a misguided belief that Indigenous ways were heathen or uncivilized (“savage”).

Ask students: What discrimination (actions) did Clara face at her school? Some ideas could include:

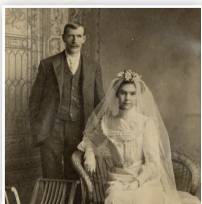
- The two groups, Indigenous and white girls were physically segregated or separated from each other, housed in separate dorms, ate separately, and engaged in all activities separately except morning mass.
- The Indigenous girls often had to do more chores at the school, including cleaning, baking, laundry, basket-making, mending and sewing, and more. In order to do these chores, Indigenous girls had to get up earlier than the white girls.
- Indigenous girls did not have the opportunity to take classes in things such as music or science like the white girls did because this was not thought to be of use to them after they completed school. The only real opportunities for Indigenous women at the time were to marry a British man and take care of the household or to provide domestic services (such as cooking and cleaning) for the wealthier British settlers.
- When these Indigenous girls got older, if they married a white man, they lost their status as an “Indian,” which was yet another assault on their identity because the status was then denied to their children and grandchildren even though retaining that status might have benefited them.

### Conclusion and Consolidation

End the lesson with the following discussion questions:

- Would you say the Indigenous girls received as good of an education as they could have at All Hallows? (It should be clear to everyone that there was racial segregation and unequal education at All Hallows.)
- What things could have been different at the school that could have made things fairer for Indigenous girls to go on to university like the white girls? (Answers might include: they could have all had access to the same curriculum; the school could have had paid help so that the Indigenous girls did not have to work, etc.)





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- What things could have been different in the society at the time that could have prevented all of this? (Answer might include: there could have been a school built in Spuzzum for the kids that lived there, where they could speak their own language and be taught by their own people.)
- Are the various things that you have just mentioned within our power to change as a society if we have the will to change them?

Explain that, unfortunately, the gap that Clara experienced in comparison to the white girls at her school still exists for Indigenous children in this country.

Ask students: what do you think about the fact that it has been about 120 years since Clara's experiences and yet this racism and gap still exist in parts of Canada?

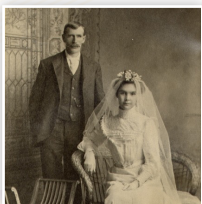
Conclude by expressing to students how this can change and that they can be part of that change. Select one of the extension activities below to complete with your students as a follow-up to the lesson.

### Extensions

- Review the concept behind "Jordan's Principle" which applies to all government services for children and states that all children should have equal access. Unfortunately, Indigenous children do not have equal access to services as non-Indigenous children. Jordan's Principle was passed unanimously in the House of Commons in 2007, but it has never been implemented. Have students undertake small group projects on Jordan's Principle and suggest ways each one of us can contribute to ending racism and discriminatory policies and programs in Canada to close the gap. Students could explore the disparities in access to health care or disparities in access to schools and education for Indigenous children. The idea is to examine disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children today to highlight ways in which we can move the needle on equity for Indigenous children in Canada in the spirit of truth and reconciliation. (See: [Jordan River Anderson - Maurina Beadle](#)).
- The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society also has a program called the "I am a Witness Campaign" that your class can take part in. This program involves having students review a timeline of Jordan's Principle and decide for themselves whether or not they think there is discrimination against First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth. Use the Tribunal Timeline and Documents available on the [website](#) for the latest news about First Nations child welfare in Canada.

### Modifications

- Students could answer questions in writing or on a computer.



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- Students could create the Venn diagram individually or in small groups rather than as a class.

### Assessment Opportunities

- Students' brainstorming can be collected for assessment.
- Anecdotal records could be taken throughout the discussions.

### Sources and additional resources

- [Across the bright continent](#), a story about Althea Moody who taught at All Hallows School (the school that Clara Clare attended)
- [All Hallow's in the West school digest](#) from 1906
- [Reference to Clara having a little boy](#) in the All Hallows' in the West digest
- [Mention of Clara written by Althea Moody](#) in the All Hallows' in the West digest
- [Reference to Clara getting married](#) in the All Hallows' in the West digest
- [Colourful Characters in Historic Yale](#) - First Peoples of Yale and Spuzzum (written by Clara Clare's great granddaughter)
- [The Diocese of New Westminster and the Indian Residential Schools System](#)