

The Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network (CEARN)

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Anti-Racism Network



This network is an expression of Canadian churches working together to support anti-racism programs and educators who are working in member churches, sharing resources and learning among anti-racism educators, and supporting long-term change in Canadian churches and church organizations.

The mandate of CEARN is *to accompany churches and church organizations in Canada who are working toward racial justice, racial reconciliation, and peace, to transform themselves and their communities. The goals are:*

1. To build and strengthen a national ecumenical network of anti-racism educators and activists.
2. To mutually support and hold one another accountable as we learn more about racism in the churches and church organizations in Canada—and become transformed churches.
3. To develop and share resources.

History

The genesis of the Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network (CEARN) can be found in 2001, part of a Canadian response to the [United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance](#) held in Durban, South Africa, that year. At that major conference, the Canadian church delegates resolved to act on some of the recommendations to the churches made by an ecumenical caucus. The first of these recommendations was “to educate church members, and to be educated, on crimes of racism and racial discrimination and the role of the churches”.

Fall 2001: Information sessions were held in Canada under the umbrella of the Human Rights Committee of [The Canadian Council of Churches](#). Several other ecumenical agencies also participated, including the [Women’s Interchurch Council of Canada](#). The delegates shared what they had learned about the impact of racism and related issues on groups such as Indigenous people, migrants and refugees, Africans and African descendants, and women.

March 2002: 40 anti-racism educators, staff and volunteers in the churches from across Canada gathered to share their experiences and to come to a better understanding of racism in Canada in order to ground their thinking and work more solidly in theological reflection.

One proposal made at the national event led to the establishment of the Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network (CEARN) that was eventually housed within The Canadian Council of Churches’ Justice and Peace Commission. One of the main objectives for developing CEARN was

to create resources for anti-racism education, and anti-racism strategies within our churches and ecumenical bodies.

A Steering Committee of representatives from churches and church coalitions met to provide vision and leadership and to plan programs, including building a national network, hosting a training event in 2002 and holding an Anti-Racism Consultation in 2003.

In the years that followed, CEARN met regularly, providing support for racial justice animators in the Canadian churches. Its second main activity was the production of resources to support racial justice in the Canadian churches. Several workshops, consultations, and book launches were also offered, including workshops on “The Doctrine of Discovery” and “Learning How to Animate Racial Justice Workshops”



2018 Animating Racial Justice Workshops

In 2017 the ecumenical agency, The Canadian Churches Forum became [The Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning \(FILL\)](#), a reference group of The Canadian Council of Churches. This agency, begun in 1921 as the Canadian School of Missions, had long participated in CEARN and had a commitment to just relationships across diversity with a particular focus on racial justice. In 2018, CEARN became part of FILL as its location in The Canadian Council of Churches. CEARN helps resource and maintain FILL’s work on racial justice

and the activities of CEARN are enhanced by FILL’s network of program designers and animators and theology and research work.

CEARN seeks to be a space open to anyone engaged in racial justice in and through Canadian churches. A steering group facilitates this wider gathering of community. CEARN remains a space of mutual support and learning from each other. As needs are identified, smaller groups of CEARN members come together for initiatives such as resource creation, workshops, and events.

Resources

Since 2006, the CEARN has also developed resources for congregational use.

2006

[God so loved the people of the World](#), contains biblical reflections, sermon notes from different Christian traditions, workshop outlines, and guidelines for doing anti-racism workshops, and significant sites across Canada to visit. Although first produced for the observance of Racial

Justice Week around March 21 in 2006, this resource can be used for racial justice education and action for any week of any year.

[Theological Starting Points for Action](#). Through this compilation of theological and practical reflections on its experience of doing anti-racism work in the churches, CEARN hopes to share learned wisdom with one and all.

2007

[From Chains to Freedom: Journeying Toward Reconciliation](#) contains reflections on the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade and offers historical background, worship resources, and suggestions on what is needed for healing and reconciliation

2008

[Resources for March 21 – International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) provides a prayer and hymn for use in local congregations

2009

[Mamoh Be-Mo-Tay-Tah – Let us Walk Together](#)

This resource is designed to help Canadians engage with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools and better understand the legacies of colonization that Aboriginal peoples live with today. It includes the essays, testimonies and reflections in this resource are organized around teachings connected to the 4 quadrants of indigenous circles.

2012

[Cracking open White identity towards transformation: Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network Examines White Identity, Power and Privilege](#) This resource zeros in on White privilege as an essential aspect of anti-racism work. Racism is one expression of the White privilege and supremacy that is present in day-to-day interactions and built into systems and church structures. It is impossible to do anti-racism work without examining White identity and the unearned power and privilege that flows from that identity. This resource includes stories, biblical reflections, and workshops.

2017

[On the Doctrine of Discovery](#) In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action on the Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullius, the Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network (CEARN) of The Canadian Council of Churches commissioned Dr. Néstor Medina to reflect on the effects of the Doctrine of Discovery in the Americas. Néstor describes his essay as a modest attempt to outline the far-reaching implications of the Doctrine of Discovery for our understanding of history and its impact on today's global and social contexts.

[Truth and Reconciliation and the Doctrine of Discovery: Select Responses of Member Denominations of the Canadian Council of Churches to TRC Call to Action #49 on the Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullis](#) The responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #49 documented in this book mark the beginning of a concerted educational effort; they are the first steps on the long path of reconciliation between the churches and the Indigenous Peoples of this land. While we cannot erase the atrocities committed in the past, we remain committed to recognizing and deconstructing their legacies in our present: to make the genocide in our past unthinkable in our children's future.

2019

[CEARN March 21st resource](#)

This resource suggests a number of resources, including sermon, worship, and action ideas, for faith communities to mark the day and work toward eliminating racism in the church and beyond.

[International Decade for People of African Descent Info Sheet](#) Learn more about the decade and ideas to assist churches with recognizing the Decade in their congregations and communities. "This Decade, which spans from 2015 to 2024, is an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the important contributions people of African descent have made to Canadian society. It also provides a framework for recognition, justice, and development to fight racism, discrimination, and the ongoing inequalities that Canadians of African descent face,"

[International Decade for People of African Descent Conversation](#) CEARN has also supported the work of this ecumenical table at The Canadian Council of Churches in producing webinars and other resources for churches. This work also included an Ecumenical Prayer Service marking Canada's first National Emancipation Day in 2021.

2020

[Resources on "anti-Black racism in Canada"](#) Responding to the Black Lives Matter movement and growing awareness of racism in Canada, CEARN compiled a list of faith based and other resources for churches as they respond to anti-Black Racism.



2017 An Act of Repudiation