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Aboriginal Human
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Racism in Canadian Society

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Racism as a commanding force in this country is constantly challenged and denied by applying the arguments of democratic liberalism. In a society that espouses equality, tolerance, social harmony, and respect for individual rights, the existence of racial prejudice, discrimination, and disadvantage is difficult to acknowledge and therefore remedy. Mainstream Canadians have a deep attachment to the assumptions that in democratic society individuals are rewarded solely on the basis of their individual merit and that no one group is singled out for discrimination. Consistent with these liberal, democratic values is the assumption that physical differences such as **skin colour** are irrelevant in determining one's status. Therefore, those who experience racial bias or differential treatment are considered somehow responsible for their state of "otherness, resulting in a "blame it on the victim" syndrome.

This conflict between democratic liberalism and the collective racism of the dominant culture creates a dissonance in Canadian society. There is a constant and fundamental moral tension between the everyday experiences of Aboriginal peoples and other racialized communities, and the perceptions of those who have the power to redefine that reality – such as politicians, bureaucrats, educators, judges, journalists, and the corporate elite. While lip service is paid to the need to ensure equality in a pluralistic society, most Canadian organizations and institutions and the individuals working within them, are far more committed to maintaining existing dominant White power relations. White culture, norms and values appear normal and natural. They become the standard against which all other cultures, groups, and individuals are measured and usually found to be inferior.

While resistance is generic to all change initiatives, a major factor of resistance to anti-racism is rooted in the extent to which organizational leaders, managers, and administrators believe racial equity is a legitimate force to motivate change. Denial of racism operates as the unseen but ubiquitous force, which ensures that substantive change is deflected and deterred. Individual, institutional, and organizational resistance is most clearly demonstrated by the kind of everyday narratives that operate within organizational systems and their cultures. Strategies in the workplace are wittingly or unwittingly used to establish, sustain, and reinforce inequalities and oppressive power relations. Aboriginal peoples are commonly essentialized, stigmatized and marginalized based on their "otherness." In our presentations we will explore the various forms of racism and more specifically how these manifestations impact upon the employment sectors of Canadian society.