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CONFRONTING AND PREVENTING HATE IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

A TOOLKIT

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The Canadian Anti-Hate Network is an independent, nonprofit organization made up of Canada's leading experts and researchers on hate groups and hate crimes. The Canadian Anti-Hate Network counters, monitors, and exposes hate promoting movements, groups, and individuals in Canada, and provides information and education to the public through journalism and advocacy.

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WSC WESTERN STATES CENTER

Western States Center is one of the United States' leading organizations working to combat white nationalism, strengthen inclusive democracy, and assist civil society to effectively respond to social movements that exploit bigotry and intolerance. Based in the Pacific Northwest and Mountain states, WSC serves as a national hub for building movements, developing leaders, shifting culture, and defending democracy to help build a world where everyone can live, love, worship and work free from bigotry and fear.

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CONFRONTING AND PREVENTING HATE IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

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Authored by The Canadian Anti-Hate Network

Contact info@antihate.ca

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INTRODUCTION

Canadians across the country report a rise in hate-promoting social movements. Because schools are hubs of our communities, they have become battlegrounds for hate-motivated organizing. There is evidence that hate-promoting groups specifically target young people with their messaging. These groups test market slang on Twitter, rewrite popular songs with white nationalist lyrics, and join mainstream video game platforms, all to reach a young audience.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only made this problem more urgent. As schools and classrooms adopt a more online and virtual approach, so, too, do those who seek to spread hate. This can manifest in zoombombings targeting anti-racist educator working groups, community town halls, and even students themselves. Virtual tools used by classrooms every day can be a battleground, where bigoted profile pictures and sometimes anonymous harassment of Black, Indigenous, and students of colour, queer, and otherwise marginalized students occurs.

The goal of this toolkit and its associated workshops is to supplement a comprehensive anti-racism education program. It will give you the tools to identify when a young person is consuming hate propaganda and is becoming radicalized, and to intervene as early as possible before the situation escalates.

In this toolkit, we'll share strategies to counter hate-motivated organizing in schools through sample scenarios that schools frequently encounter. Whether a student has been found passing out hate-promoting flyers on school property, or more actively advocating for a "white student union/alliance" or "Canada First" student group, the following pages offer advice for parents, students, teachers, school administrators, and the wider community. Not enough resources exist to address the problem in schools. This toolkit is specifically focused on responding to hate-motivated targeting and recruitment of students.

It's easy to miss an unfamiliar hate symbol or feel unsure about how to respond to a student citing a hate-motivated source in the classroom. There's a lot to keep track of when working with young people; we want to make it easier to recognize these behaviours (and those responsible), and to take action.

Everyone who engages in the life of a school is in a unique position to isolate and push back against growing hate-promoting movements. It's time to own that power. Our job is to build schools where everyone feels valued, and where students can grow to be engaged citizens of an inclusive democracy.

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT WHEN WE SAY HATE-PROMOTING MOVEMENTS?

Hate is not a dislike of a person or a thing. It is the dehumanization or discrimination against specific groups on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and disability.

People often think of white nationalism and white supremacy when they think of hate movements. According to Canadian academics who specialize in studying these movements, white supremacists "believe in the superiority of whites over non-whites, and advocate that white people should be politically and socially dominant over non-white people." This can extend to a belief in the need for violence against, or even the genocide or removal of people of colour.

Advocacy for a white ethnostate is inherently anti-immigrant, Islamophobic, antisemitic, and anti-Black, but white nationalist organizing can manifest without publicly mentioning race or religion, often using coded messaging to launder or disguise the true intention.

Hatred never stops at BIPOC communities. Included in all forms of hatred is misogyny – hatred or prejudice against women – and 2SLGBTQIA+ – specifically anti-trans – messaging. There is just as much content targeting women, girls, and those in the queer and trans communities as there is race-motivated hatred. Hate-promoting individuals often believe that women, girls, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community are also changing the demographic and eroding the fabric of society.

They believe that diversity and demographic changes are equal to white genocide. Hate-promoting individuals may use anti-immigrant, anti-Black, and Islamophobic rhetoric focused on crime or terrorism to appeal to base prejudices and reach a broader audience that might initially find their true ideology too extreme. Misogyny and anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rhetoric – such as messaging painting trans communities as dangerous or feminism as cancer – is a key recruitment tool for hate-promoting groups and movements. Each of these has the dangerous potential to foster violence.

WHY DO WE NEED TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION IN CANADA?

Many Canadians wrongly believe that hate is not a problem in our country the way that it is in the United States. This belief cannot be further from the truth. A report in June 2020 by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue found that over 11 million people were reached by 6,600 right-wing hate-promoting social media pages, groups and accounts in Canada. Canadians were the third-largest nationality on 4chan, and only behind the U.S. and U.K. in posting on Iron March, a fascist web forum where Atomwaffen Division was born.

It is important to note that Canada is half the size of the United Kingdom, and one-tenth the size of the United States. To be so over-represented amongst online hate groups is reflective of a massive problem within our country.

In the last year, charges have been laid against numerous Canadian youth for hate-motivated crimes. In March 2021, three Sudbury, ON, youths were charged for a hate-motivated assault which was filmed and uploaded to social media. Five teenagers in Kitchener, ON, were charged for a hate-motivated attack on a train in November 2020. According to media reports, "one of the youths allegedly used racial slurs against two people on the LRT … spat on them, brandished a knife and threatened to end their lives." A grade 12 student from Markham, ON was charged in September 2020 after "hate-motivated comments" were made during online learning. In February 2020, a 17-year-old boy fatally stabbed a woman. He told police the attack was retribution for rejection by women and that he self-identified as an incel.

The COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to worsen the problem, as students may feel unsure, anxious, or grief from losses of loved ones or their perception of "normalcy." Hate-promoting groups and individuals have capitalized on the opportunity to recruit people into hate and violence promoting ideologies, and provide an easy scapegoat in vulnerable communities, to deal with difficult situations.

WHY DO STUDENTS OF COLOUR PARTICIPATE IN HATE MOVEMENTS?

Although white nationalism is explicitly anti-BIPOC and anti-immigrant, many students of colour actively contribute and have been involved with hate-promoting movements. In Canada, the Proud Boys have insisted they are not a hate group because they are multi-racial and previously had a Latino leader in the US. Educators have shared stories with us about students of colour engaging in hate movement organizing, including white nationalism. Canadian students of Asian origin have been found to administer neo-fascist social media channels.

Shared beliefs in misogyny, anti-2SLGBTQIA+, Islamophobia, and anti-Blackness will often attract and unite people of colour to hate groups. Alek Minassian, the perpetrator of the 2018 Toronto van attack, was a student of Toronto's York Region District School Board, where only 30% of the student body identifies as white or of European descent.

Additionally, there is far-right messaging in other cultural spaces. Islamophobic Hindu nationalism has been more of a topic with the Indian farmer protests in 2021. WeChat, a messaging platform popular with Chinese Canadians, is also a venue for far-right content.

Youth are at risk with other hate movements, too. Minassian is of Armenian descent and adopted his views in part by spending time on incel forums. A report by the ADL found that while roughly 55 percent of respondents from the incel community were white, the remaining 45 percent were of a range of ethnic and racial groups including Black, Latino, and Middle Eastern. To try to explain the heavy presence of people of colour in the incel movement, the Toronto Star reported on how the foundational misogyny in these communities overrides racial tensions in alt-right spaces.

GIRLS, TRANS, AND NON-BINARY YOUTH IN HATE MOVEMENTS

Girls and women are also at risk of being susceptible to manipulation leading to hate movement involvement. Girls and women have been used in hate movements for as long as they have existed. They serve to launder the messaging by making it more digestible and to add credibility.

Historically, girls and women have been treated as a means to advance the cause by having large families, however, they have also served important roles in networking and relationship building. They are also used as propagandists on social media. Some of the most visible hate-motivated propagandists are women, e.g. Lauren Southern and Faith Goldy.

In our work, some of the most extreme neo-Nazis have been teenage girls. They will often feel a need to prove themselves to the cause, and to boys and men who inherently undervalue their existence. They are almost inevitably subject to abuse.

While less likely, non-binary and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are also at risk of being vulnerable to hate propaganda. For example, a member of very extreme neo-Nazi groups hid his trans identity from his compatriots as they threatened journalists and caused terror.

Sometimes, it's due to these kids struggling with their own identities and looking for a community. There have been a number of 2SLGBTQIA+ and non-binary people leaving hate groups.

DIGITAL AND MEDIA LITERACY

Digital and media literacy are critical to overcoming and preventing hate in schools. The internet is used to recruit students through manipulation and targeted disinformation. Digital and media literacy often refers to the media that students consume personally, but also strongly reflects in the sources students may use in their work. Education in digital and media literacy should come from a foundational framework of inclusion, social justice, and historical accuracy.

Education on digital and media literacy can start young. Learning for Justice, an initiative from the Southern Poverty Law Center, has lesson plans and teaching resources for grades K-12. Media Smarts, a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization for digital and media literacy, is another resource for educators.

WHITE NATIONALISM - White supremacists, some of whom are white ethnonationalists, are inherently anti-BIPOC (anti-Black, Indigenous, and Person of Colour) and anti-immigrant. At its core is the belief that Canada should return to the demographics of before 1967 – when Canada was more white.

In the spring of 2020, when Black Lives Matter protests broke out in backlash to the murder of George Floyd, Canadian hate groups had a strong reaction to protestors. White nationalist and self-admitted propagandist arm of the alt-right Faith Goldy said that the police brutality was justified and that "Blacks on this chessboard are all pawns, being corralled by masters of strategy in government, media, and the Satanic orgs which seek to subvert and control our civilization – who, let's face it, aren't Black." White nationalists have a long history of believing that Black people are not able to lead movements themselves, and are being influenced by an "unknown power" (an antisemitic dog whistle referring to their belief in a Jewish cabal that controls everything). As of 2020, hate crimes targeting Black communities are all too commonplace in Canada, representing 16% of all hate crimes.

The Wet'suwet'en rail blockades of early 2020 resulted in threats of death and injury to Indigenous land defenders - including violent and aggressive attempts to dismantle camps and blockades themselves. This was immensely harmful for a community that feels unsafe with law enforcement, and few, if any, repercussions were felt by those responsible.

While some white nationalists will claim they respect Indigenous sovereignty, when the chips are down, that support is nowhere to be found and is performative at best. For example, the neo-Nazi Canadian Nationalist Party once worked with a Métis political organizer, who praised the CNP as the party that "many Canadian Aboriginal people are looking for." This tokenized view of Indigenous peoples and nations is often used as a shield against criticism of being racist, but it is rooted in their fundamental beliefs of who deserves to be on this land. Indigenous peoples, obviously, were here first. Even though white nationalists will sometimes performatively include Indigenous peoples in their framework, they offer nothing as a solution to the deep-rooted institutional and cultural racism faced by Indigenous communities.

This movement has a long history in Canada. In the 1980s and early 1990s, in Caroline, Alberta, the Aryan Nations were confronted by activists, many of whom were Jewish. Heritage Front, once Canada's largest hate-motivated threat, terrorized the streets of Toronto in the 1990s. The Ku Klux Klan once had a very sizable Canadian base. These ideas have not grown overnight, but have instead become part of our ingrained culture of white colonialism. It is important to distinguish between white supremacy rooted in bigotry and colonialism, which seeks to uphold institutional and systemic harms against marginalized groups, and hate-motivated organizing, which seeks to establish political power.

ALT-RIGHT - According to the Southern Poverty Law Centre, the alt-right is an ideology whose loose membership holds a core belief that "white identity" or "western society" is under attack by multicultural forces using "political correctness" and "social justice" to undermine white people and "their" civilization." After Charlottesville, the alt-right rebranded somewhat to the "Groyper" movement, a loose collection of younger white nationalists, led by American Nick Fuentes. The Groypers have a large presence in Canada. They are explicitly pro-male. They may accept BIPOC males into their ranks, but girls and women are largely dismissed, or only viewed as a means to advance the ideology through having large families. Much of their ideology centres around co-opting Catholicism and many identify as Catholic or traditionalist. The Canadian alt-right/Groyper movement explicitly seeks to achieve political power by introducing bigoted ideas into the mainstream and working within the political system to achieve their goals.

The alt-right/Groypers have a heavy presence on social media and meme culture, using humour and irony to share their messaging. They sometimes attempt to infiltrate mainstream Conservative political parties to influence change. While the majority of Groypers are white, there are a growing number of youth of colour involved in the movement, as they engage in antisemitism, anti-feminism/misogyny, anti-2SLGBTQIA+, Islamophobia, and anti-Black racism.

Groypers have even denied the fact that they are white nationalists, while continuing to use the same talking points as their alt-right predecessors. Adherents of the ideology rebrand and whitewash their belief system as the public starts to view them disfavourably, while under the same general worldview. They are prone to implementing new names and self-descriptions to signal their belief system to others while maintaining a level of secrecy - such as "paleoconservative," "nationalist," "gamer," and "real conservatives" - and to "hide their power level." Fuentes has instructed his young following to "hide their power level from their parents" - directing them to hide how extreme their politics are ("power level") to avoid detection.

The specific Canadian flavour of this worldview is seen on many college campuses, often under the banner of "Canada First." In 2020, McMaster University Conservatives were scrutinized for allowing members with overtly bigoted beliefs and ties. The terms "alt-right," "paleoconservative," and "Canada First" are deliberately misleading to sanitize the ultimately hate-motivated agenda and values of its believers.

ANTI-BLACK RACISM - Anti-Black racism continues to be one of the most common forms of hate found in hate-motivated spaces, resulting from our systemically white supremacist, colonialist and imperialist history.

Racism towards the 1 in 30 Canadians and 1 in 11 Torontonians who are Black is both overt and systemic, impacting every facet of life. Data from BCG and CivicAction paints a grim picture:

- Black students are four times more likely to be expelled from school than white students from a Toronto high school

- Black residents are 20 times more likely to be shot by Toronto police than white counterparts

- 83% of Black people in Canada say they are mistreated at least some of the time - even though a 2019 survey of Canadians found that half of the country believes racism against Black people is not a problem

- The dropout rate for Black students in Toronto is 23%, and Black students are disproportionately not represented in gifted programs or advanced study streams

The threat to Black bodies and Black lives is highlighted even further when examining the Canadian carceral system, where Black Canadians are hugely overrepresented. A total of 7.3% of Canadian prisoners are Black, while Black people only make up 3.5% of our population.

Efforts taken by community activists to address these deep disparities are often met with hate and dismissal. During and after the summer of 2020, when the Black Lives Matter and George Floyd protests were at a fever pitch, anti-racist community meetings and educational workshops across Canada have been zoombombed by white racists in attempts to derail organizing. Some of those same organizers later received hate mail strewn with anti-Black slurs. Threats against demonstrators protesting against police brutality and deaths were commonplace.

ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM - With Canada's colonialist history, anti-Indigenous racism has been part of our society for as long as "Canada" has existed. It remains one of the most accepted forms of hatred, and is deeply ingrained in our daily interactions and worldviews. More and more efforts to incorporate anti-colonialist education and practices have become part of our social justice framework. Despite this, systemic, overt, and passive racism against the Indigenous community persists.

Governmental policies, the carceral system, policing, the courts, family services, and more have been plagued by anti-Indigenous racism since inception. Children were taken from their families by force and made to follow Christianity and endure unspeakable abuse in residential schools. They were forbidden from participating in any part of their culture and languages. This is recent history – the last residential school closed in 1996. The Sixties Scoop tore Indigenous babies from their mothers' arms under racist policies that sought to erase their culture and community bonds. "Starlight Tours" – where Saskatchewan and Manitoba police would take Indigenous men to rural areas and leave them there in the dead of a cold prairie winter – were common. Little has been done to address these murders.

As a result of generations of trauma and discrimination, Canada's current houseless population is predominantly Indigenous, and our child welfare services are overwhelmingly filled with Indigenous children. Prisons house a massively disproportionate number of Indigenous people – 30% of the prison population, despite making up only 5% of Canada. The healthcare system regularly fails them, where they face racism in hospitals and experience a lack of care. The missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) movement seeks justice for Indigenous women and girls lost to disproportionate gender-based violence, and is too often treated with distrust and dismissal.

In 2020, at the height of the Wet'suwet'en solidarity actions and blockades, racist threats against Indigenous land defenders were rampant. Indigenous people are targeted by law enforcement, and treated more punitively. Barbara Kenter, of Thunder Bay, lost her life to racism, and her killer received prison. Yet Colton Boushie's killer did not, and a traumatized community was left reeling.

ANTISEMITISM - The Jewish community is often portrayed by hate-promoting individuals as this outside force, with outsized control of television, banking, entertainment, education, and even our government. It's why the torch wielding mob of white men in Charlottesville, Virginia, chanted that it was "Jews" who will not replace them — the white race — as controllers of the United States. While this event took place in the US, an alarming number of Canadians participated in the 2017 rally. Antisemitism often provides the rationale that hate-promoting movements, specifically white nationalists, use to power their racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and other forms of hatred. "Jews and non-Jews need to understand that we have a unified threat. The white nationalist movement in the United States doesn't simply seek to spread hate; it seeks to use hate to build political power," writes Eric Ward, Executive Director of Western States Center, which has produced excellent educational resources for schools, and whose work is modelled in this resource. The same applies here in Canada.

ISLAMOPHOBIA - In recent years anti-Muslim sentiment has grown steadily in Canada. Largely in spaces like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, people of all ages and backgrounds have expressed hatred toward both newcomers and Muslims born in Canada. Muslims are often placed at the centre of dangerous conspiracy theories, such as one that says Muslims started the Fort McMurray fires to build a mosque. The community has also experienced horrific violence against them, such as the Quebec City mosque shooting by Alexandre Bissonnette, which killed six and injured 19 worshippers. A large number of organized hate groups in Canada are explicitly Islamophobic, including the Soldiers of Odin, Proud Boys, Northern Guard, and others.

MISOGYNY AND ANTI-FEMINISM - Misogyny and racism often go hand in hand, especially in online forums (like 4chan, 8kun, Reddit, and incel-specific forums) and gaming circles. Expressing simultaneous entitlement and disillusionment, misogynists and anti-feminists exploit online communities to nurture and often build upon angry young men's feelings of injustice and animosity, and this animosity often redirects toward women as well as people of colour, immigrants, and religious minorities. The "incel" movement, short for "involuntarily celibate," is an online subculture mostly composed of young heterosexual men who often endorse violence against the "sexually active" population, especially women. When Alek Minassian killed 10 people in the Toronto Van Attack he admitted that he planned the attack as an "incel rebellion" and cited his beliefs that women should be punished for not wanting to be sexually active with him.

ANTI-2SLGBTQIA+ - Homophobia and transphobia also play an important role in hate-promoting ideologies. For example, white nationalism believes that white people are being erased faster than they are able to reproduce. They blame the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in part, saying that they have an agenda to force a 2SLGBTQIA+ identity on children. Members of the Northern Guard, a Canadian-based hate group, have been known to post onto social media calling the 2SLGBTQIA+ movement an "attack on the family." On online gaming platforms, homophobic slurs are abundant. Anti-trans hate is frequently found in online spaces. A large part of what fuels hate movements is toxic masculinity, and anything that hate-motivated individuals deem as being a threat to patriarchy is attacked in their circles.

Not all anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment in Canada is rooted in ethnonationalism. In particular, anti-trans organizing (which seeks to exclude primarily trans women from social spaces, sport, and policy) has seen an uptick in in recent years, with numerous groups participating in coordinated harassment and flyering campaigns based on debunked science and disinformation.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND RECRUITMENT

Young people spend an enormous amount of time on social media, and are exposed to many different platforms that carry the potential for hate movements to recruit and organize. YouTube, for example, was cited as the primary cause of "red-pilling" (a term used to describe a dramatic shifting of viewpoints, usually toward hate ideologies) in far-right and fascist group chats.

Youth may be "irony-poisoned," a term describing the process in which they are exposed to so much ironic and bigoted humour that it eventually ceases to shock them, and they may adopt those views unironically.

We will discuss a few key social platforms, but this is by no means exhaustive – wherever youth are online, hate movements are there trying to recruit them.

TikTok – Many alt-right figures with established Facebook and YouTube followings have begun to pivot to TikTok in an attempt to get their message to Gen Z. Groypers are commonly found on TikTok, where they engage in campaigns to co-opt popular trends by stealing content from other users and adding slurs to it. Fuentes has been overt in his direction to flood TikTok with Groyper content.

As the TikTok platform is intended for short videos, it's easy for youth to fall down rabbit holes given the sheer volume of content they may consume. This makes it difficult to contextualize and understand what is being viewed. White nationalist and hate content hijacks the platform with humour and subversive content aimed at leading youth down a path to more blatant hate content.

Telegram – Telegram as a publishing and networking tool is very valuable for citizens of authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world, however, usage in Canada can be a red flag. While many hate-promoting individuals attempt to code their messaging on public platforms like Facebook and Twitter, the messaging on Telegram tends to be more violent and direct. Some of the most extreme far-right wing – those who promote mass murder – are found on Telegram.

Streaming Platforms – A number of streaming platforms have gained popularity, such as Twitch, DLive, Trovo, and others. These are popular platforms for Groypers specifically, as well as other types of white nationalists, to livestream and produce content. In Canada, we have seen a huge increase in the number of alt-right and white supremacist livestreamers. It is also used to earn income, as these platforms allow for money to be sent directly to the broadcaster on the stream.

WHY THIS MATTERS

All teenagers seek a sense of identity and belonging. Hate-promoting movements and groups know this and look for ways to connect with young people in order to grow their base and influence. It takes vigilance on the part of students, teachers, administrators, and parents to ensure that all members of a school community feel connected in positive ways and are not left vulnerable to toxic and bigoted rhetoric or recruitment.

Adults often dismiss early indications of bigoted ideology as a student "pushing boundaries" or "acting out," and while this might also be true, in many cases they are dismissing warning signs of a dangerous affiliation taking root. Race may not initially enter the picture: recent events demonstrate strong connections between misogyny, the sexist incel subculture, and other hate-motivated movements. Seemingly isolated incidents, like a student scratching a swastika into a desk or engaging in misogynistic or Islamophobic language, warrants a response that clarifies behavioural expectations, affirms the value of all human life, and opens a dialogue with students to interrupt this behaviour.

Left unchecked, involvement and affiliation in a hate-promoting ideology is dangerous. Once a student is connected to it, online or offline, it is difficult for them to disconnect, so the best time to intervene in a young person's affiliation is early. After they identify with hate-promoting movements, interventions can push them further away if not done carefully, or create a more dangerous situation. We urge the utmost caution at this stage. Hate-motivated movements bring inherently violent and escalating threats to the families and communities they impact. It is no accident that a number of incidents of mass shootings have involved hate-promoting ideologies. Scapegoating marginalized communities is one warning sign for violence. Hate-motivated groups seek power and an organized base of support. Schools are an obvious target. This toolkit is designed to help you take back any space, however small or large, that hate-promoting individuals or groups may try to carve out in your school community.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit works best as a guide with suggestions and resources to help school communities navigate their own questions and challenges. Students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents, and other community entities can collaborate to adapt these approaches and find new solutions. Our goal is to provide effective resources to all members of school communities so that they may build a fence of protection around their school and their community, and pull youth back before they are fully ensnared in hate movements.

This resource isn't intended to replace anti-racist curriculum or programs. It is a supplementary support aimed specifically at identifying and attempting to deal with involvement in far-right social movements potentially leading to violence.

We focus on high schools, but many of these resources also apply to middle schools and colleges. While this toolkit was created to offer tips and strategies on how to respond to hate-motivated organizing in schools, the following resources can and should be applied to any situation where you see potentially harmful activity. We encourage other anchor entities – libraries, faith-based organizations, community centers, and others – to discuss these scenarios and strategies, engage with local schools, and collaborate to strengthen community responses to hate.

A resource section is included at the end of this toolkit to aid your learning and help your school community grow stronger. One key resource is a list of proactive steps and best practices for schools. The section includes related resource guides, sample policies and language, and basic information on the hate-motivated groups most likely to recruit in schools. Links to further reading also provide a starting point for your own research. Please consider reaching out to the Canadian Anti-Hate Network at info@antihate.ca to share your experience countering hate in your school. We hope this toolkit is helpful as you strengthen your school community against bigotry.

ANONYMOUS USE OF HATE SPEECH OR HATE SYMBOLS

The range of physical and virtual spaces in a school community provides ample opportunities for students to express themselves and communicate with one another. Anonymous spaces, however, can foster the kinds of communication and expression that threaten the integrity of the school community. Bigoted graffiti, unsanctioned flyering, and anonymous online comment platforms challenge schools to maintain free and open spaces without making space for hate.

EXAMPLES

» School property is vandalized with a hate group symbol or phrase, with no means to identify the culprit

» Someone has distributed flyers promoting a white nationalist group, event, or ideology

» Anonymous online content disparaging marginalized students or groups appears

SUGGESTED APPROACHES

STUDENTS

» Document the incident if safely possible: take pictures or screenshots, and save a copy of any physical materials.

» Report the incident to multiple staff members including administrators in ways that feel safest. Talk to a teacher or other staff member you trust about your concerns.

» Talk to classmates and your parents, as well as any other stakeholders who can support you.

» Engage with student-led groups as you feel comfortable, including student council, advisory committees or other student support groups.

STAFF

» Document the incident if safely possible: take pictures or screenshots, and save a copy of any physical materials.

» Contact your administrator(s) to make them aware of the situation. Speak with colleagues to gauge their awareness and build a coalition of staff members committed to addressing the issue.

» Disable anonymous commenting on classroom platforms.

» If a specific student or group feels targeted by these actions, plan and provide aftercare.

ADMINISTRATION

» A quick and clear response can prevent escalation. While anonymous use of hate symbols is not generally considered an immediate threat to the school community, it is often cited after more serious incidents as an early indicator that went unaddressed.

» Remove the content as quickly as possible, and make sure key stakeholders know you addressed the problem.

» Share the incident, including evidence if possible, with your administrative team.

» Connect with your faculty about the issue.

» Contact any district supervisors who can assist you in responding.

» Consider implementing a confidential or anonymous online reporting system as a way for students to make your team aware of situations like this.

» Depending on the extent or severity, consider opening a community-wide conversation for other stakeholders to get information and ask questions.

PARENTS

» Ask your child to collect evidence if possible and safe to do so, and share this evidence with school administrators.

» Engage with other parents and community members. Bring up the issue at any parent organizations or school community meetings you can attend. Cite other instances of this nature to substantiate your concerns.

» Follow up with administrators to confirm that they address this.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

» Collect evidence if safe and possible to do so.

» Contact school administrators directly.

» Attend meetings open to members of the broader community to express your concerns.

» Check in with relevant entities—after school programs, parks, libraries, shopping centers—to see if hate speech or symbols are present elsewhere in the community.

SUCCESS STORY

A swastika was found carved onto a library chair, with no way of knowing who had done it. The administration removed it immediately, and the school's newly formed culture and climate team discussed the incident and brainstormed ways to check in with students who knew it had happened and to be more vigilant about public spaces. The school also implemented an anonymous reporting system to encourage students to come forward with concerns.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- ☒ Don't ignore the incident or dismiss concerns. While seemingly minor and untraceable, anonymous identifiers are often the first indicators of a nascent and potentially aggressive white nationalist presence.
- ☒ Don't overreact. Punishing the student body as a whole or fixating on identifying the perpetrator may shut down dialogue and render stakeholders reluctant to come forward with future concerns.

INVOCATION OF HATE-MOTIVATED IDEOLOGY

The best classroom environments support students seeking and engaging with outside sources. Research skills remain among the most vital to postsecondary success, alongside critical thinking and the ability to assess source material. Hate-motivated online personalities, bloggers, public speakers, and other prominent figures actively seek to influence and enlist young people with access to larger school communities. Students need support as they navigate the endless material available to them to ensure that their social, emotional, and cognitive development are not impeded by the dangerous rhetoric of hate-promoting social movements.

EXAMPLES

» Students citing white nationalism or extremist source material in schoolwork

» Students citing, invoking, or parroting hate-motivated source material in class discussions

» Students distributing or promoting these materials on school property or through school-sanctioned platforms, including learning management systems or class web pages

SUGGESTED APPROACHES

STUDENTS

» If you feel comfortable, ask follow-up questions of your classmate in a discussion or in peer editing situations: examine resources and viewpoints.

» If a student shares materials outside of class, bring these to the attention of a staff member you trust.

» Lead by example: research all source material, and research any sources with which you are not familiar to check for bias or problematic affiliations.

» Ask your teachers if they keep lists of trusted online sources or if they can prepare a lesson to help students better understand bias in source material.

STAFF

» Establish assessment criteria for source material in student work, including for any structured discussions or other classroom activities to create and clarify accountability. See sample language for teachers on structured assessment of student work in this toolkit.

» Collaborate with students to set classroom policies and procedures that establish community standards for cited materials.

» Review resources for teaching digital and media literacy, and credible source selection (learningforjustice.org).

» Consider a workshop at the start of each year to review how students can vet source material for bias.

» Meet with the student's counsellor or other wellness staff members to see if they have noticed any increase in aggression or frustration that might correspond to an interest in extremist ideology.

» Make an administrator aware of your concerns; include evidence and relevant links.

ADMINISTRATION

» Meet with students and teachers involved to understand their concerns.

» As appropriate, meet with the student who cited or promoted this material to understand the appeal and interest: for what frustrations are they seeking validation from hate-promoting individuals?

» Consider a workshop for staff to help promote effective online research practices across disciplines. Involve your school librarian to design and implement research practices.

» Ask teachers what resources might help them reinforce effective research skills, as well as what norms and policies have worked in their classrooms to clarify acceptable and valid source materials.

» Consider adapting some of these as standards across the school.

PARENTS

» A basic awareness of what kids absorb online is elemental to maintaining their safety and understanding their evolving perspectives. Sites not explicitly dedicated to white nationalist ideology—including Reddit, 4chan or 8chan—can host robust sections where kids are actively recruited.

» Open a conversation with your child about the spectrum of validity and bias in online resources, both academic and those rooted in personal interest. What YouTube channels do they follow? What podcasts have they heard about what subjects?

» If you have concerns, make an appointment with a counsellor or staff member you feel knows your child well. If your child shares concerns with you, help them voice these concerns to staff members they trust.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

» The ability to teach and reinforce effective research often hinges on the resources necessary to do so. Advocate for a certified full-time librarian in each of your local schools, and request information about how the school teaches research methodology.

» Consider joining or seeking election to advisory boards or panels that help make decisions about a school's budget and goals.

WHAT NOT TO DO

☒ Don't treat all student sources as equal; they're not. Validating hate-promoting is not the same as valuing other viewpoints. Rather, it concedes credibility to rhetoric that demeans members of our school communities.

☒ Don't sweep it away and move on. Young people are seeking and finding hate-motivated sources at alarming rates. Sharing this material via schoolwork or otherwise can indicate that a student needs support. Plan and provide aftercare by engaging with school wellness staff.

SUCCESS STORY

In a Canadian History class, a student repeatedly cited from hate-promoting online sources, including sources by Stefan Molyneux. His parents did not seem receptive to the teacher's concerns when she met with them. The teacher revised future assessment rubrics to account for the viability and academic validity of source material, ruling out the vast majority of hate-promoting publications and figures.

A student used a recognized hate symbol as her avatar on a classroom discussion page. Concerned students emailed the teacher about it. The teacher met with the student outside of class, and she insisted she didn't know the image carried racist connotations. The teacher shared evidence with her from reputable sources, and they agreed that she would remove the avatar out of respect for her classmates.

HATE-MOTIVATED ICONOGRAPHY AND GROUP IDENTIFIERS

Overt expression of hate-motivated ideology or identification as part of an organized hate group reflects a more urgent problem. In these instances, students feel some combination of frustration and alienation, along with the confidence to reveal their stance to the school community. This increased visibility seeks to grab attention, unsettle others, and recruit more members. School communities are not helpless in the face of these efforts.

EXAMPLES

» Students displaying hate-promoting symbols, slogans, or other identifying iconography on clothing, school supplies, cars parked on school property, or school-issued computers

» Students identifiably distributing materials that depict hate-promoting imagery or ideology, including buttons, stickers, avatars, screen names, or other visual representations to the school community

SUGGESTED APPROACHES

STUDENTS

» If you feel safe doing so, gather evidence.

» Report the incident to multiple staff members including administrators in ways you feel safest. Include documentation.

» Talk to a teacher or other staff member you trust about your concerns.

» Engage with student-led groups as you feel comfortable, including student council, advisory committees or other student support groups.

» Consider organizing a meeting with peers to brainstorm response strategies in your school community. Include adults who share your concerns and can support your efforts.

STAFF

» Contact your administrator(s) to make them aware of the situation. Provide documentation about the threat of the ideology being promoted, as well as evidence of the danger these groups pose to school communities.

» Speak with colleagues, including wellness staff members, to gauge their awareness and build a coalition of staff members committed to addressing the issue.

» If a working relationship exists, meet with the student to share your concerns and ask questions. Consider inviting an additional trusted staff member to join this conversation.

» Increase the visibility of symbols of diversity and tolerance in your classroom, including pride flags and culturally affirming posters and portraits of pioneering members of historically marginalized groups.

ADMINISTRATION

» Acknowledge the concerns of students or staff members who brought an incident to your attention.

» Collect evidence about the nature and threat of the ideology being promoted, especially for any community meetings that may arise in response.

» Reach out to student leadership groups to engage them in brainstorming solutions.

» Reach out to civil rights organizations, locally or nationally, for resources and suggestions.

» Examine your school's policies. Do the symbols fall under the category of gang activity or hate speech? Can they be considered disruptive to the educational process? Often these incidents are already prohibited under existing policies.

» If such policies don't exist to cover these contingencies, start the process to create them.

» Concurrent with any policy-based responses, open and continue a conversation with the student(s) involved, including wellness staff members when appropriate, to address underlying issues and support students on all sides.

» Consider establishing a culture and climate team to discuss ways to prevent similar issues in the future. This can be a committee of staff members, ideally with student input, dedicated to ameliorating issues of inequity within the school community.

PARENTS

» If your child shares concerns with you about a hate-motivated presence at school, work with them to brainstorm the best way to open a conversation with school staff and administration.

» Help them gather evidence of the threat posed by this presence, and ask them if they have specific concerns that you can help address. Are they worried about the potential for violence? Does the school seem unresponsive? Continue to check in with your child to help them manage the stress of this situation.

» If you feel comfortable doing so, attend a school board or council meeting to express your concerns.

» Reach out to community organizations, locally or nationally, for additional resources and suggestions.

» If you are worried about your child, please see the resources at the end of this toolkit, and reach out to a school counsellor immediately.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

» The health of a school community depends on the commitment and engagement of the community as a whole. Community-based entities, including libraries, after-school programs, service opportunities, sports teams, civic and faith-based organizations can all play a role in uniting the community in response to the presence of hate groups.

If a student or group of students is increasingly affiliated with hate-promoting groups, community entities can brainstorm positive responses to engage all students and build a stronger community—instead of fertile ground for hate group recruitment.

WHAT NOT TO DO

☒ Don't categorize hate speech as free speech. Hate-promoting symbols are the schoolhouse equivalent of yelling 'fire' in a crowded theatre; this is dangerous speech, and it threatens not just the fabric of a school community, but the day-to-day safety of students and staff.

☒ Don't settle for a solely punitive response. While invoking policies that forbid the presence of hate symbols and rhetoric at school removes the visible indicator, it doesn't resolve the conditions that brought these elements into the school. Continue to seek and facilitate dialogue with student(s), staff members, wellness staff, and administrators to understand how this element gained currency in your community and what each stakeholder can do to address the problem.

SUCCESS STORY

An art student added a lesser-known hate-promoting symbol to a class mural, and classmates noticed. The students brought the issue to the teacher's attention, who then consulted with colleagues and administration to decide on a course of action. The teacher and an administrator met with the student, but the student was inflexible and unremorseful about the harmful nature of what he did. Wellness staff was alerted and asked to watch for signs of increased stress or agitation in the student, and the teacher followed up with the initially concerned students. When the student subsequently threatened a classmate, the school had a record of the initial incident on which to base their concern and to advocate for additional intervention, which was then provided.

EVIDENCE OF HATE-MOTIVATED ORGANIZING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Students who have been recruited by an organized hate-promoting group will soon be pressed to recruit and proselytize in their school communities. Research traces a longstanding pattern of approaches, all of which aim to further increase visibility and membership, as well as destabilize diverse school communities.

EXAMPLES

» Students distributing, physically or electronically, organizational propaganda to recruit new members and disseminate hate-motivated ideology—website links, pamphlets, manifestos, videos, mp3s, books, zines, and other formats all turn up in school settings as efficient ways to reach students

» Students distributing information, physically or electronically, about upcoming hate-promoting events—rallies, marches, speaking appearances, concerts, membership meetings, and other gatherings

SUGGESTED APPROACHES

STUDENTS

» If you feel safe doing so, gather evidence.

» Report the incident to multiple staff members, including administrators, in a way that feels safe. Include documentation about the ideology being promoted.

» Engage with student-led groups as you feel comfortable, including student council, advisory committees or other student support groups. Consider organizing a meeting with peers to brainstorm response strategies in your school community. Include adults who share your concerns and can support your efforts.

» As tempting as it might be, don't confront the student(s) involved. At this point, your classmate may be fully involved with a violent hate-promoting organization, and confrontation is not a safe option.

STAFF

» Clarify that hate-promoting materials are not welcome in your classroom in any form.

» Collect evidence and report the efforts to an administrator immediately.

» In conjunction with administration, discuss the issue with students as necessary and appropriate.

» In conjunction with administration and wellness staff, meet with the student's cohort of teachers to share observations and discuss ways to support this student as the issue goes forward.

» Open a line of communication with the student's parents to work together in support of this student.

» If you have not already done so, collaborate with students to draft or revise classroom norms and policies that prohibit any materials that promote hatred and bigotry of any kind.

ADMINISTRATION

» Acknowledge the concerns of any students or staff members who brought this to your attention.

» Collect evidence about the nature and threat of the ideology being promoted, especially for any community meetings that may arise in response.

» Work with your staff to assess any level of threat this student might pose, and consider a systematic, holistic response: wellness issues are as vital to an effective response as academic and behavioral aspects.

» Reach out to student leadership groups to engage them in developing solutions.

» Reach out to civil rights organizations, locally or nationally, for resources and suggestions.

» Most school districts have explicit guidelines about the distribution of outside materials, as well as policies that prohibit hate speech or otherwise offensive materials. If your school's policies don't cover this scenario, begin the process to revise the rules. No school community is obligated to allow the distribution of bigoted materials from outside organizations.

PARENTS

» Check in with your child to help manage the stress of increasing hate-promoting rhetoric at school.

» Engage with wellness staff and teachers to keep lines of communication open.

» Request updates from administration about their efforts to block recruitment.

» Attend any meetings open to you on these issues. Parents can obstruct attempts by white nationalist groups to infiltrate a school community for recruitment purposes, as well as attempts to increase their presence in the community at large.

» Parents enjoy connections across community entities, and those entities can build an effective response. Talk to community organizations, local businesses, elected officials, faith-based groups, parks staff, and others. Facilitate a meeting to develop an action plan.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

» Collaborate with school staff, parents, students, and other community entities to monitor and formulate a response to increasing hate-promoting efforts in your area.

» All aspects of a community play a vital role in that community's overall health; no one is helpless or without a way to contribute. If you have a meeting space available, host leaders and residents from across your community to share information, ask questions, and brainstorm solutions. If you can donate food or supplies for these events, that's a huge help. If you can attend and encourage others to do so, that matters just as much. Your local school is the heart of your community, and it needs you involved.

SUCCESS STORY

A school newspaper student staff member composed an editorial advocating for a white history month, using language and argument support common in mainstream hate-motivated rhetoric, and the faculty sponsor ran the piece. In a subsequent edition, faculty and staff submitted response pieces, all maintaining respectful tones, and no disciplinary action was involved. Administration and wellness staff agreed to check in with the student periodically, as well as with her teachers, and the situation never escalated.

WHAT NOT TO DO

☒ Don't let hate-promoting groups frame the conversation. Stay focused on the values of your community and the needs of students. Hate-promoting groups will co-opt language about free speech and cultural identity to steer the dialogue away from the bigoted nature of who they are and what they do.

☒ Don't ignore the needs of the community as a whole. At this level, a school community may see bystander trauma among students encountering these recruitment efforts, and the visibility of hate-promoting groups in the area may introduce additional complications outside of school. Keep wellness staff engaged and responsive, check in with students, and reach out to all aspects of the community.

ORGANIZING IN SUPPORT OF HATE-PROMOTING IDEOLOGIES AT SCHOOL

In tandem with active promotion of existing hate-promoting groups, students are often pressed to organize within their school communities. Hate groups have a playbook, and pushing students to form white student unions or argue in favour of teaching a white history month remains elemental to their efforts to deceptively empower young recruits. Students are convinced that they are the marginalized group, and as a result, they should demand rights and recognition they have never lacked. To be clear, the pro-white or pro-European group or event the student seeks to establish is a tool of hate-promoting groups.

EXAMPLES

» Approaching teachers or administration to advocate for school events or groups promoting pan-European culture—a "white student union" or "European history month," among other examples

» Establishment of pro-white online spaces within or adjacent to the school community as it exists online—a Facebook group, a discussion thread, a tweet, or any other facilitation of white nationalist online discourse

SUGGESTED APPROACHES

STUDENTS

» This situation requires committed student advocates for tolerance and racial justice. Connect with leaders of a wide range of student groups, and enlist a faculty facilitator.

» Plan a meeting to share concerns and ask questions.

» Keep the health of your school community central to stated goals, rather than punishment for perpetrators. Pushback from peers can backfire, increasing tensions and seeming to justify requests for separate white entities and events.

STAFF

» In conjunction with the administration, gather information on the history of white student unions (and similar efforts) as anti-diversity, especially since the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement.

» Share resources for colleagues to respond to students' questions about the issue, because by the time teachers hear about it, the student body has already been discussing it.

» Volunteer to facilitate meetings among student leadership to counteract these efforts.

» Record students' questions and concerns to share with administrators, as students may not feel comfortable doing so.

» Understand that some stunts, such as "white student unions/alliances" are designed specifically to invoke a strong response and media attention. There have been cases where college-level attempts were then used to lodge human and civil rights campaigns, alleging anti-white racism. Don't play into that and become an unwitting actor in these ploys.

ADMINISTRATION

» Meet with the students making these requests. Listen to everything they want to say, record their requests, take supporting information from them, and ask thoughtful questions. Often, these students have little more than dogma to offer, but some students may have impassioned and intricate stances that have led them to this point. They will likely not listen to an administrative response if they feel they have not been heard, which may further cast them as victims of racial discrimination—the misguided perception that drives these requests.

» With that said, the answer still needs to be "no." Many schools have groups celebrating specific European heritage groups, but this is vastly different from a pan-European or "white pride" group. Latinx student groups and Black student unions exist to mitigate long histories of social and educational inequities. The same need does not translate to white students, and to maintain a school community that promotes tolerance and refuses space for white nationalism, these requests cannot be dignified as viable.

» Understand that some stunts, such as "white student unions/alliances" are designed specifically to invoke a strong response and media attention. There have been cases where college-level attempts were then used to lodge human and civil rights campaigns, alleging anti-white racism. Don't play into that and become an unwitting actor in these ploys.

PARENTS

» Parents occupy a unique space from which to respond positively to students' formal attempts to organize within the school. As staff handle the intricacies of policy and the tense interactions likely taking place around the school building, parents can counterbalance these tensions.

» Speak to administrators to find out how parents can support existing student organizations that promote tolerance and racial justice. What events might the school community organize in response to increased hostility from white nationalist students?

» Consider planning a community dinner to unite the students and families in your area, a fundraiser for a local nonprofit serving marginalized communities, or a book drive to diversify the school's library materials.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

» Increase the visibility of existing inclusive community organizations. Plan and promote events and activities for students and their families to counter attempts by hate-promoting groups and individuals.

» Continue to connect community entities with one another and with staff, administrators, students and their families to support the school and further its goals of tolerance and equity.

SUCCESS STORIES

A student who was found carrying dozens of copies of flyers for a longstanding hate-promoting group was initially suspended without additional support, and tensions surrounding his situation escalated. At the urging of staff members, follow-up counseling was provided, and the student's relationship with the school community greatly improved. He stopped wearing paraphernalia and espousing hate-motivated beliefs a few months later.

Social media accounts promoting a "white student alliance" popped up on Instagram in Edmonton. These stunts are generally intended to provoke a strong reaction and media coverage in part so that the perpetrator can claim the reaction itself is evidence of anti-white racism. The Edmonton Public School Board issued a strong statement condemning the rhetoric spread by the account, affirmed their commitment to students of colour, and committed to an investigation. Administration encouraged faculty to have honest dialogue with their students about the material, and parents were updated as the investigation progressed. The School Board also committed to further anti-racism education in their schools.

WHAT NOT TO DO

☒ Don't downplay the significance of these efforts. For years, hate-promoting groups have incited young recruits to push their racist agendas at school. This is a pivotal part of the white nationalist playbook, and schools must respond decisively.

☒ Don't wait for someone else to speak up. Hate-motivated organizing within a school can be unfamiliar and intimidating, making it difficult to respond. This is why communicating with all members of the community matters: everyone has the right to resist bigoted ideas.

ON THE SPOT/CLASSROOM SCENARIOS

Sometimes educators and students will find themselves in the position of requiring an immediate response to a student in class who invokes a bigoted ideology. While these situations should be treated carefully, they need to be addressed as they happen. These incidents can range from mild to severe, and each will require its own approach, depending on the situation.

EXAMPLES

» A student argues in support of democracy-threatening events like the January 6, 2021 Capitol Hill attack, or movements like Stop the Steal, or the COVID-19 conspiracy movement in class discussion

» A student asks why there aren't any straight pride parades, or a white history month during class discussion

» A student uses a racist trope, slur, or a historically racist revision in class discussion

» A student uses the Hitler salute in class

SUGGESTED APPROACHES FOR EDUCATORS

DOS

- Build a personal library of resources to have on-hand for these situations which require a more immediate and on the spot response. If you don't know the answer right away, a personal library of resources will help find it so it can be addressed at the time. Eg. the Anti-Defamation League's education resources and the SPLC's Learning for Justice.
- Let the student know right away that behaviour is not acceptable and is harmful, and explain why. Educate the student if you feel the information is coming from a place of ignorance rather than malice.
- If able, counter the student's remarks with facts and create a teachable moment. If you are not sure how to counter, refer to resources to determine a good approach.
- Invite them to discuss with you further after class, one on one.
- Let the school administration know so it can be documented, if warranted.
- Depending on the situation, a meeting with the parent(s) may be warranted.

DON'TS

- Don't allow other students to pile onto the student. A strong reaction from classmates may push the student further into harmful ideologies.
- Don't keep it to yourself to address later. Doing so will reinforce a negative message that the students harmed by the action are not important, and will give students the false impression that it is ok.

WHEN HATE COMES FROM STAFF MEMBERS

As disheartening as it is to imagine, a number of communities have encountered hate-promoting ideologies from the adults with whom they entrust their children each day. In fact, there are numerous well-documented examples of this occurring in Canada. One of the most famous Canadian Supreme Court cases involving wilful promotion of hatred involved a teacher who brought his ideas into the classroom. A more recent example involved a student teacher who abused his position of power to teach Holocaust denial.

Endorsement of hate-promoting messaging from teachers, administrators, or parents in and around the school setting is especially troubling, and it presents unique challenges in responding. We hope, for example, that students would feel comfortable approaching an administrator about a teacher denying the reality of the Holocaust in class, but we understand that this level of trust and confidence might not be widespread. A parent might not know how to report an administrator found to be posting in an online hate group, or a teacher could feel conflicted and nervous about reporting a colleague's troubling remarks to administrators. Like all of the scenarios in this toolkit, responding to these incidents requires that we apply what we know about our school community, its stakeholders, and its power structures.

Here are a few suggestions for how to respond when an adult authority figure in the school community promotes white nationalist views or attempts to recruit students to hate-promoting groups:

» As always, document as much as possible. What was said or written, where, and when? If it's online, get screenshots. If it was spoken, connect with others who witnessed it.

» Start with someone you trust and who you know would also stand against bigotry: a parent, a trusted colleague, an administrator or board member who has spoken out against hate in the past.

» Keep your school's stated values at the center of the conversation. What elements of a school mission or vision statement might provide guidance and serve as a reminder of what really matters?

» Explore your school or district's structures: is there a board meeting you could attend or a general email to which you can send concerns? Check school and district websites for comment forms or other outlets, and decide if you feel comfortable using identifying information if it is required and de-escalation training for your school.

» Consider engaging with a nonprofit dedicated to confronting bigotry. Several organizations have staff who liaise with schools and communities in the wake of these incidents.

» Challenging people in positions of power can be intimidating. Seek support and don't give up. If one approach doesn't yield results, consider other options: another administrator or board member, district human resources, or union representation. If the staff member offers up one of the Five Common Defences of Hate Propaganda (pg. 38) you can respond. We can't let abuse of authority in our schools go unchecked.

» A situation in which school staff members promote bigoted or hate-promoting views threatens to destroy community trust in the school's ability to provide factual and unbiased education and calls for immediate action by school administrators. Administrators who encounter hate-promoting rhetoric or activity from a staff member must consider appropriate disciplinary actions as well as direct support for any students or other school community members who may have been impacted. A full review of the staff member's responsibilities and areas in which they may have caused harm may be appropriate. Administrators should also consider broad reparative actions to reinforce inclusive values and regain trust across the school community.

PROACTIVE STEPS

Before problems arise, schools can take concrete steps to make their communities less vulnerable to hate-promoting groups and individuals. **Consider some of the following steps:**

» Involve parents and parent organizations in school functions whenever appropriate.

» Foster and support strong student organizations.

» Maintain strong ties to a wide range of community organizations: libraries, community centres, faith-based groups, and service organizations can play vital roles in reporting and responding.

» Build resilience and compassion among students by sharing positive stories of communities helping each other during the COVID-19 pandemic, and lift up positive stories of BIPOC and marginalized communities in the classroom and school in general.

» Make training available to help all staff identify students who may be vulnerable to recruitment or already exploring hate-promoting ideology.

» Maintain dedicated and fully staffed wellness specialists: counsellors, social workers, a school nurse, and other vital roles. Encourage your wellness specialists to familiarize themselves with hate-promoting ideas and symbols.

» Take student claims of harassment seriously, whether they are based on race, gender, immigration status, sexual orientation, or any other identifier.

» Establish a culture and climate team at your school to monitor and discuss issues related to equity and racial justice.

» Implement a confidential or anonymous online reporting system through which students can share safety concerns.

» Explore restorative justice models and de-escalation training for your school.

» Review school policies as they might apply to hate-promoting symbols and potential efforts to promote or recruit, including on social media.

» Build skills among students for gathering, assessing, questioning, and critiquing source material.

» Increase the visibility of symbols of diversity and tolerance throughout your school community.

» Encourage teachers to establish norms and policies for classroom work and behavior that reinforce tolerance and obstruct hate-promoting ideas.

» Encourage students, teachers, parents, and administration to engage in a discussion about updating school curriculum to reflect a strong community that values the identities and stories of all of its members.

» Examine learning management systems and other school-sanctioned online platforms for their capacity to offer space for hostile discourse.

» Maintain an active, responsive school-wide curriculum to keep students aware of the long-term impacts of how they represent themselves and interact with others online.

» Host an informational event for parents to understand the threat of hate-promoting ideology online.

PROACTIVE STEPS

BEST PRACTICES

Before, during, and after a school encounters hate-promoting ideas or organizing, several approaches remain vital to the wellness of a school community.

» Any digital content collected from a student should be handled carefully. Thoughtful judgement should be used when deciding who to share it with to ensure the safety of all students.

» Always discuss how everyone involved can move forward in a positive way.

» Focus on the values at stake, and use 'we' as the default pronoun on behalf of the school community.

» Report all incidents to multiple people at different levels within the school community.

» Document everything. When incidents arise, gather evidence and submit all concerns in writing.

» Involve law enforcement prudently. Direct threats and other situations in which a student or community member's safety is in question warrant law enforcement involvement. Often other situations are better resolved with a holistic school community approach.

» Keep lines of communication open.

» Keep students central to conversations, and trust their experiences.

» Access and search any school-owned devices used by the student. When warranted, obtain parental permission to search the student's devices.

» Follow up on conversations and concerns.

» Avoid an alarmist tone; keep the situation as calm as possible.

FIVE COMMON DEFENCES OF HATE PROPAGANDA

1

It's about pride, not prejudice.

This argument is often invoked when hate-promoting efforts are identified as hostile and discriminatory, sometimes going as far as equating "white pride" with Latinx pride or Pride Month in support of LGBTQ+ communities. This is a false equivalence.

Historically marginalized groups gather to celebrate as a way to stand against long histories of discrimination and violence against them; hate-promoting individuals attempt a false equivalence by claiming the same. The truth is that hateful rhetoric is never far from assertions of "white pride."

2

This is a free speech issue.

In addition to falling under the same category as shouting "fire" in a crowded theatre by endangering others, hate-promoting rhetoric is not protected speech in schools. A range of legally upheld policies support the rights of schools to keep hate speech out.

3

This is all just political correctness by social justice warriors.

Here are two terms that have been co-opted by the far-right, and should be red flags. Challenge them to replace the term "political correctness" with "basic respect for others" and "social justice warriors" with "people who are against racism."

4

What about reverse racism?

Claims of reverse racism fly in the face of data that demonstrate systemic advantages for white people in access to education, economic opportunity, the application of criminal justice and life expectancy. While members of any group may commit acts of bias against any other, these acts do not add up to systemic, historically-rooted racism (also called institutional racism or white supremacy) that disproportionately produces negative outcomes for people of colour.

5

Racism is over.

Unfortunately, it's not. Recent years have seen sharp increases in hate crimes against marginalized groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as immigrants and members of LGBTQ+ communities. We have work to do together, and we need to listen to one another's experiences instead of denying reality.

CONCLUSION

Strong schools foster strong communities. When we recognize and address the signs of hate-motivated organizing promptly within our schools it sets an indelible example, for teachers, students, and the community at large. Everyone has the right to embrace their identity, but hate-promoting ideas threaten the safety of the vulnerable, robbing us all of our humanity and the things that link us together. Students who are attracted to hate-motivated movements are often vulnerable themselves. They may be disillusioned, feel marginalized, or struggle with untreated trauma or mental health issues. We must show them compassion when it seems the hardest to give, because that is what hate-motivated movements cannot offer our students.

We can care for our young people while also starving hate-promoting ideologies of the oxygen they need to grow. We hope this toolkit has offered you options to this end. The threat of hate-motivated organizing is a holistic school community issue. It's more than an isolated incident, farther reaching than an anonymous flyer, and larger than the anger or alienation of a few students. We must ensure there is no room in our schools for movements that dehumanize people based on race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or nationality.

Our job is to construct a democracy where everyone has value. If we can model that for each other in our schools, it will be easier to translate to other institutions of public life. By working with all stakeholders to handle these situations thoughtfully and incrementally, we can push back hate-motivated movements and groups in all facets of our community.

KNOW YOUR OPPOSITION

Each hate-promoting group operates in unique ways, targeting distinct populations and often using different slogans and tactics. It is important to inform your response to hate-promoting activity by understanding the ideology behind each group, their common recruitment tactics, and their past actions.

In Canada, the issue is more movements than formal groups. Organizing has shifted to individuals and loose associations and networks who are highly vocal and active amongst alt-right and other hate-promoting movements. This is done intentionally to give hate movements more flexibility and adaptability as times and circumstances change. The list below includes background information on some of the hate-promoting groups and individuals most likely to influence high school and middle school students.

Canada First - a big-tent rebrand of the Canadian Alt-Right

Canada First is a recent ideology that has been very present amongst the alt-right. They are strong believers of white nationalism that is hidden beneath messages around "country first" and other patriotic proclamations. Canada First ideology has been prevalent amongst young Canadians who are involved in the alt-right and who idolize Nicholas Fuentes. Canada First is increasingly being found in conservative campus groups that have been infiltrated by white nationalists and fascist believers. They are frequent users of streaming platforms.

The Proud Boys - The Proud Boys was started in 2016 by Gavin McInnes and has since gained notoriety since the 2017 white supremacy rally in Charlottesville, Virginia and Donald Trump's call to "stand back and stand by" at the 2020 Presidential debate. They also played a central role in the January 6, 2021, violent insurrection at Capitol Hill in DC. In 2017, they disrupted an Indigenous event on Canada Day in Halifax. They are responsible for numerous instances of violence at rallies. They are a group of predominantly white young men, with known chapters in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta. Their mottos include: "West is best," "Glorify the entrepreneur," "Venerate the housewife," and "I won't apologize for creating the modern world."

Some chapters have closed down since the Canadian government declared the Proud Boys a terrorist entity in 2021, however, given that it is a widespread set of beliefs among the far right-wing, it's anticipated that the ideology will manifest itself in a different way, under a different banner.

ID Canada - Originally named Generation Canada, ID Canada is a nationalist movement that was started in 2016. The group claims to have been started as a response to "Canada's decaying identity, increased third-world immigration and the prevalence of anti-European sentiment in this country." Recruitment posters and stickers have been found in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and elsewhere since 2019.

Iron March Legacy - Iron March Legacy is what we use to describe overtly neo-Nazi terroristic networks like Atomwaffen Division and The Base. They are a network of underground terror cells based on promoting white supremacy and civilization collapse. The network arose from an online fascist forum called Iron March and is composed of mostly young men, some with military training. Other offshoots include Feuerkrieg Division (Europe and North America) and Sonnenkrieg Division (UK). It is important to note that the specific group they may belong to is less important than the overall network, which may include numerous groups or cells. Atomwaffen Division, The Base, and the network's ideological leader James Mason were listed as terrorist entities in Canada in 2021.

Stefan Molyneux - Stefan Molyneux is a Canadian white nationalist, banned YouTuber and podcaster who has been described as an influential figure in leading youth into the alt-right movement. His content promotes conspiracy theories, eugenics, and 'scientific' racism, and he has provided a platform to many white supremacists throughout his career. As of September 2020, he was banned from YouTube, Twitter, and a number of other audio social platforms for violating hate speech policies.

National Policy Institute - Richard Spencer's National Policy Institute is a white nationalist think tank that cloaks bigotry in intellectualism. With papers on its website such as "Understanding Jewish Influence," the group is one troubling source that may show up in school papers.

The Daily Stormer - The Daily Stormer is the world's biggest neo-Nazi website. It's run by Andrew Anglin and is known for its violent rhetoric and "Stormer Troll Army," as Anglin calls his readers. The site is modelled after popular, youth-oriented news sites and peddles in snark and hyperbole to draw in younger viewers. Anglin once talked about his recruitment strategies to target youth, saying in a 2018 podcast with another neo-Nazi, "My site is mainly designed to target children...[age] 11 through teenage years... Young adults, pubescents."

When a caller who claimed to be 14 called into the show to show his support, Anglin then went on to say, "Over the next five years, you're going to see an entire generation coming into their 20s that are on board with all of this... we have created a movement among the youth that we're not even able to gauge the size of."

COMMON FAR-RIGHT MEMES/HATE-PROMOTING SYMBOLS

As part of your action plan, as a first step, please feel comfortable contacting us at info@antihate.ca to ask about material or a situation. We are happy to diagnose memes, symbols, or other materials and provide you with an interpretation.

Memes and other symbols of hate-motivated ideology are an important way that young people express their interest or affiliation. Some of them may come across as tongue-in-cheek rather than serious, but the "trolling" orientation of online far-right culture is part of the way it appeals to new potential recruits. Humour plays a central role as a recruitment tactic for youth for hate-promoting organizations. Youth may be "irony-poisoned," a term describing the process in which they are exposed to so much ironic and bigoted humour that it eventually ceases to shock them, and they may adopt those views unironically. Hate-promoting organizations exploit young people's attractions to pranks and jokes by gradually adding harassment, bigotry, and cruelty to the "humour."

The symbology of online far-right and hate-promoting spaces is constantly evolving. Below are some common memes and symbols, but it is important to do ongoing research to recognize new and changing symbols. Some that are more obvious, like the swastika, have been left out.

It is also important to contextualize memes and symbols. Some symbols have alternative meanings, such as the swastika and runes, so context must be considered. In youth culture, where imagery is so important, it's critical to research a symbol or a meme before making assumptions.

For example, a Canadian school principal was alerted to a student using a profile picture in classroom online spaces which the teacher thought was concerning and indicative of racist ideology. The principal approached the student about the image, and the student was confused about what the problem could be. When we reviewed it at the principal's request, we found through reverse image searching the image on Google that it was from a video game.

FAR-RIGHT MEMES

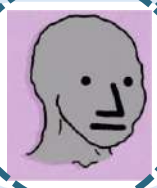
Pepe the frog is a comic character that was appropriated by far-right online spaces, particularly 4chan, and is now well-known as a racist mascot, popular in white nationalist spaces. There are many variations of Pepe. Note: Because Pepe was co-opted by racists, its usage cannot be assumed to be hateful and context should be considered (e.g. it is commonly found in benign spaces on the video game streaming platform Twitch).

Wojak or "Feels Guy"- Wojak, or "Feels Guy," is a meme often used in concert with Pepe the frog and in similar online spaces such as /pol/ on 4chan.

The Happy Merchant - The "Happy Merchant" meme is an antisemitic cartoon used in far-right online spaces to suggest greed or a Jewish conspiracy.

Helicopter rides - Images of helicopters, often with people falling from them, have been used by a number of alt-right groups including the misogynist paramilitary group the Proud Boys and Anti-Communist Action. The usage of this meme is a reference to Chilean dictator Pinochet's tactic of killing his opposition by throwing them out of helicopters. It is specifically used to celebrate and encourage violence against ideological opponents.

"Chad guy and Trad Girl"- A meme often found in anti-feminist and incel groups that depict the ideal for cisgender white men and women. It has since been adopted by other ideologies. The memes originally began circulating on 4chan, and there are numerous versions. The example on the left is the "Nordic" Chad.



Non-Playable character (NPC) - The NPC is in the same meme "family" as Chad Guy and Trad Girl. Used to mock "normies," or people who don't subscribe to their belief systems. Usage has become common-place, so do not automatically assume racist connotations.

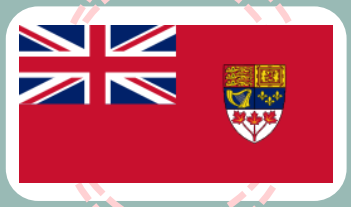
Fashwave - known as the "aesthetic of the alt-right," fashwave is an appropriation of vaporwave, where fascist icons and ideology are depicted with bright colours and graphics or with electronic music.

These images are often heavily filtered, may incorporate "laser eyes," and usually involve text that speaks to the ideology.

Redpilled - A meme drawn from *The Matrix* films, being "redpilled" is used by hate-promoting individuals to refer to a decision to "accept the truth." Once people are "redpilled" they have chosen to become aware of alt-right ideology and viewpoints.

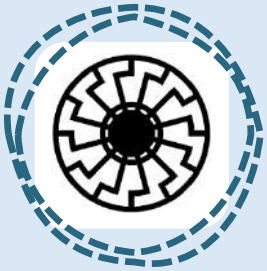
Other forms of being "pilled" include whitepilled (as a result of positive news – typically positive for the hate movement) and blackpilled (as a result of negative or depressing news for the hate movement). Unlike most memes, being "pilled" is generally something a person says or writes, and not an image. In this example, the user says that being "redpilled" means acknowledging the JQ, or Jewish Question.

HATE-PROMOTING SYMBOLS



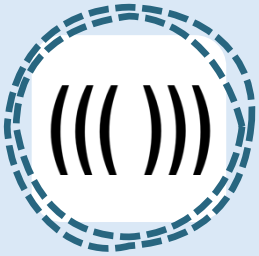
Canadian Red Ensign - Canada's flag until 1965 has been appropriated by white supremacists to symbolize their desire to return to a time when Canada was whiter - before multiculturalism became national policy - and celebrate colonialism. It was popular with groups such as Blood and Honour and Aryan Guard, who flew it at rallies. Young white supremacists have used it extensively in their propaganda.

Context should always be considered. The Red Ensign is still flown by Legions, some military veterans, and others without a hateful agenda. However, a teenager with a Red Ensign profile picture merits a second look because of its prevalence in young white supremacist groups.



Sonnenrad (Black Sun) - An ancient Norse and Celtic design, but was co-opted by the Nazis. Its redesign was done by Heinrich Himmler and featured prominently on the floor of an SS castle. In current times, its usage is explicitly white supremacist.

Kolovrat - A Slavic pagan sunwheel symbol that has been adopted by neo-Nazis. While its usage is increasing in North America, it is predominantly associated with Eastern European far-right movements. Note: Context should be considered with the kolovrat, as there may be individuals who use it strictly as a Slavic pagan symbol.



Echoes - Often used to denote someone as Jewish or part of the Jewish conspiracy, triple parentheses around a name, term, or phrase.
e.g. (((pandemic))).

Wolfsangel - An ancient rune that was co-opted by the Nazis and used as a symbol by some SS units.

Life rune - An ancient rune co-opted by white supremacists. Note: not all usage of runes is white supremacist and context should be considered when deciding if it is bigoted in nature.

Valknut - An ancient symbol related to Odin. Note: not all usage of Odinist symbols is white supremacist and context should be considered when deciding if it is bigoted in nature.

SAMPLE LANGUAGE RESOURCES

Sample language for a STUDENT email to a staff member or administrator:

Emphasize the perceived threat to the safety and integrity of your school community.

» I'm concerned about something I saw at school recently.

» A classmate said something very disturbing during a discussion yesterday.

» I am worried this situation will escalate.

» A group is meeting to plan a public event.

Sample language for TEACHERS on structured assessment of student work and structured discussions:

Source material meets established criteria for:

» Credibility

» Lack of bias

» Use of data

» Interaction with academic research

» Contributions to discussion reflect respect for the identity and beliefs of classmates

» Student maintains appropriate academic tone and language

Sample language for ADMINISTRATORS to craft policies to obstruct white nationalist presence in schools:

These are examples of existing policy approaches.

» Clothing is prohibited which might "disrupt the educational process."

» Prohibiting use of school networks or hardware to access "inappropriate content."

» "Exhibiting or publishing any profane, obscene, indecent, immoral, libelous, or offensive materials."

» "Offensive language and gestures, propositions, behaviour, or harassment based on race, colour, national origin or immigration status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender identity, gender expression or disability."

» "Overt display of gang affiliation."

» "Use of any computer, including social networking websites, or use of any information technology device to threaten, stalk, harass, bully or otherwise intimidate others."

EXAMPLES OF SCHOOLS SPEAKING OUT AGAINST BIGOTRY THROUGH POLICY AND PUBLIC STATEMENT

As part of their 2017-2021 Equity Action Plan, York Region District School Board (YRDSB) has implemented the "Report It" tool, an anonymous reporting platform that will allow individuals in schools to document hate and bias incidences.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board stated: "The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has a strong commitment to equity and inclusion. We acknowledge that we have work to do within our system. As a school district, we are committed to challenging ourselves to examine privilege and question how we can make changes to eliminate racism from within our system. We are committed to creating a place where everyone has an opportunity to learn and work in spaces of respect and belonging."

The Calgary Board of Education's Superintendent, Christopher Usih, told Global News that the CBE had been listening to students and community members feedback on anti-racism action in schools: "That action requires us to take a look at, again, our practices and listen to what our students are telling us and what our families are telling us. And then making sure that in any one of our schools or workplaces, we're being very clear: there is no room for racism or discrimination in any one of our schools or workplaces."

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