

Shake Up The Establishment

Environmental Racism Toolkit

Prepared by [Shake Up The Establishment](#) in collaboration with **Experiences Canada** for the Climate Change Forum as part of the Virtual Youth Leadership Forums 2022-23. This tool kit is accompanied by the [webinar/workshop which was delivered by Shake Up The Establishment on February 5, 2023.](#)

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Discussion Guide

Below are some reflective questions and exercises to partake in to further your understanding of the topics covered in our workshop/webinar.

Environmental Racism and Justice

Author: Manvi Bhalla (she/her)

Questions and Activities

Check Your Understanding

Provide a definition for each of the following:

- A. Environmental racism
- B. Climate justice
- C. Health inequity
- D. Intersectionality
- E. Social determinants of health

Apply Your Knowledge

1. What are some ways that the following people can address environmental injustices? List a minimum of one for each.

- a. Grassroots activists
- b. Scientists, researchers and public health authorities
- c. Government officials

2. Think of one other type of role/ job that could help address environmental racism and explain how. (*Hint!* For example, how could school teacher(s) help address environmental racism?)

Activity: Making Connections Between Environment, Health & Inequities

First, make a list of (at least) **three different negative environmental impacts** from lack of environmental protection (e.g., loss of biodiversity), natural disasters (e.g., flooding) and/or

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climate change (e.g., increasing number of heat waves). Adjacent to this, list (at least) **three different social determinants of health**. Beneath each row, provide an explanation of how that negative environmental impact from lack of environmental protection, natural disasters and/or climate change might affect certain communities more than others based on that chosen social determinant of health. After you have explained each row, try mixing it up and try to explain (at least) three different combinations of rows together.

For example,

Negative environmental condition	Social determinant of health
Increased number of heatwaves	Income
Connection: Individuals with higher income are able to more readily adapt to an increased number of heat waves because they are more likely to have safe indoors shelter, as well as cooling (e.g., air conditioning). Individuals with lower income are less likely to have air conditioning, might not be as readily able to take time off work if they work in precarious settings that are not equipped to handle working throughout a heat wave, and some might even be without shelter or refuge meaning they will have to endure and survive the heatwaves increasingly so with limited resources. This will more likely lead to those individuals having to be forced to be more resilient in the face of dehydration and other negative bodily health impacts, including potentially loss of life.	

Environmental Racism Case-Studies

#1: Grassy Narrows (Ontario)

Author: Hayley Brackenridge (she/her)

Review the context

In 1970, mercury poisoning was discovered in Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation), an Ojibwe community in Northern Ontario, as a result of upstream contamination by Dryden Chemicals Ltd.'s pulp and paper mill (1). The contamination has caused long lasting effects on resident health, traditional food sources, and economic stability by eliminating clean drinking water, as well as sustenance,

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recreational, and commercial fishing (2). The Government of Canada has made little effort to support the community, until 2020 when the Mercury Care Home Framework Agreement was signed, giving Grassy Narrows First Nation \$88.6 million of funds to design, construct, operate, and maintain a mercury care home (3).

References

1. The Canadian Encyclopedia [Internet]. Toronto: Historica Canada; c2022. Grassy Narrows; 2020 Dec 10 [cited 2022 Jan 9];[about 1 screen]. Available from: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/grassy-narrows>
2. Ilyniak N. Mercury Poisoning in Grassy Narrows: Environmental Injustice, Colonialism, and Capitalist Expansion in Canada. McGill Sociological Review [Internet]. 2014 Feb [cited 2022 Jan 9];4:43-66. Available from: <https://www.mcgill.ca/msr/msr-volume-4/mercury-poisoning-grassy-narrows>
3. Indigenous Services Canada [Internet]. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Government of Canada and Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) sign revised Framework Agreement for Mercury Care Home; 2021 Jul 26 [cited 2022 Jan 9];[about 3 screens]. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2021/07/government-of-canada-and-asubpeeschoseewagong-netum-anishinabek-grassy-narrows-first-nation-sign-revised-framework-agreement-for-mercury-care-home.html>

Discuss + Reflect

1. In your opinion, is the Mercury Care Home Framework Agreement adequate justice for the environmental racism in Grassy Narrows First Nation? What else could be done to bring justice to the community?
2. How does the history of cultural erasure compound the effects of environmental racism on members of the Grassy Narrows First Nation community?

#2: Shelbourne (Nova Scotia)

Author: Aarisha Elvi-Haider (she/her)

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Review the context

Shelburne, Nova Scotia is a town with significant legacies of environmental racism where Indigenous and Black Canadian communities were disproportionately impacted by the poorly regulated environments and toxic waste dumps near their homes. As a result of this placement of waste, which is largely rooted in environmental racism, communities with low socio-economic status suffer both mentally and physically (1). The two waste facilities that are in close proximity to an African-Nova Scotian community have received industrial, medical and residential waste for 75 years, contributing to a large number of deaths (2). The data from the ENRICH project indicated that since the toxic waste dumps and landfills are located close to the Nova Scotian African and Mi'kmaw neighbourhoods, this resulted in higher rates of cancer and respiratory illnesses in these communities (1,3). In our workshop, we analyzed the intersections between health impacts and social determinants of health to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of community care, and how members who are not affected by environmental racism should cultivate and strengthen their solidarity work.

References

1. Ingrid Waldron & Juliet Daniel. Environmental Racism: New study investigates whether Nova Scotia dump boosted cancer rates in nearby Black community. The Conversation. 2021 [cited 2022 Jan 14]. Available from: <https://theconversation.com/environmental-racism-new-study-investigates-whether-nova-scotia-dump-boosted-cancer-rates-in-nearby-black-community-162839>
2. Story Map Journal [Internet]. [cited 2021 May 23]. Available from: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=06f534a113644200afa6b49e572299a9>
3. Robert Devet. A community of widows. The Shelburne dump and environmental racism [Internet]. Nova Scotia Advocate. 2017 [cited 2021 May 23]. Available from: <https://nsadvocate.org/2017/01/02/a-community-of-widows-the-shelburne-dump-and-environmental-racism/>

Discussion + Reflect

1. When you learned about the stories of the residents of Shelburne, what was your initial response and what were your emotions? Do you think what happened to them is fair?

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2. If you were in Shelburne to witness the environmental racism that this community was subject to, what would be your immediate calls to actions for your campaign to advocate for the wellbeing of the people of Shelburne?
 - a. List at least three 'asks'
 - b. Determine who they are directed towards (e.g., fellow Canadians, political leaders, scientists, public health officials, etc.)

Learning Resources

Below is a non-exhaustive list of resources to learn more about the topics and related issues covered in our webinar and workshop on Environmental Racism in what is currently Canada.

Topic	Resources
Environmental racism/ justice	- Chavis, B. F., Jr., 1994, Preface. In R. D. Bullard, editor, Unequal Protection: Environ- mental Justice and Communities of Color. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, xi- xii. Centre for Environmental Health Equity (website coming soon) - Environmental Protection Agency: https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice - Book, "Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada" (2010): http://www.ubcpres.ca/speaking-for-ourselves - Climate change and public health: https://444da59f-dca6-4e49-8245-8afb04c87b64.filesusr.com/ugd/afdd27_6369a7d17a11456f874fbb25828cf4.pdf - Defining eco-justice: https://www.shakeuptheestab.org/post/eco-justice - Aamjiwnaang community in Sarnia's 'Chemical Valley': https://aamjiwnaangsolidarity.org/resources/ - MP pledge for healthy environment for all: https://davidsuzuki.org/story/mp-pledge-for-environmental-rights-takes-off/ - Climate Change & Gender report (March 2018): wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GGCA-CA-RP-07.pdf https://www.cela.ca/collections/justice/environmental-justice-and-equity - Canadian Environmental Law Association: https://cela.ca/ - Addressing Environmental Justice to Achieve Health Equity (2019): https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2020/01/14/addressing-environmental-justice-to-achieve-health-equity

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Climate justice	Saraswat, C., Kumar, P. Climate justice in lieu of climate change: a sustainable approach to respond to the climate change injustice and an awakening of the environmental movement. <i>Energ. Ecol. Environ.</i> 1, 67–74 (2016). https://doi.org/10.1007/s40974-015-0001-8
Examples of environmental racism	
Grassy Narrows	- The Canadian Encyclopedia [Internet]. Toronto: Historica Canada; c2022. Grassy Narrows; 2020 Dec 10 [cited 2022 Jan 9];[about 1 screen]. Available from: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/grassy-narrows - Ilyniak N. Mercury Poisoning in Grassy Narrows: Environmental Injustice, Colonialism, and Capitalist Expansion in Canada. <i>McGill Sociological Review</i> [Internet]. 2014 Feb [cited 2022 Jan 9];4:43–66. Available from: https://www.mcgill.ca/msr/msr-volume-4/mercury-poisoning-grassy-narrows - Indigenous Services Canada [Internet]. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Government of Canada and Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) sign revised Framework Agreement for Mercury Care Home; 2021 Jul 26 [cited 2022 Jan 9];[about 3 screens]. Available from: https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2021/07/government-of-canada-and-asubpeeschoseewagong-netum-anishinabek-grassy-narrows-first-nation-sign-revised-framework-agreement-for-mercury-care-home.html - George N. T. [Internet]. Toronto: The Star. Environmental racism is a tale as old as time; 2021 Nov 25 [cited 2022 Jan 13];[about 3 screens]. Available from: https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2021/11/25/environmental-racism-is-a-tale-as-old-as-time.html?rf - Benjamin, C. (2018). Generations of Grassy Narrows youth are paying the price of government inaction. Retrieved 21 February 2020, from https://www.amnesty.ca/blog/indigenous-peoples-in-canada/generations-of-grassy-narrows-youth-are-paying-the-price-of-government-inaction/ - Prokopchuk, M. (2019). 'We need action': Grassy Narrows chief decries delays in construction of mercury poisoning care home. Retrieved 21 February 2020, from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/grassy-narrows-inan-meeting-1.5164583 - Scharper, S. (2016). Grassy Narrows mercury disaster a form of environmental racism. Retrieved 21 February 2020, from

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	https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2016/06/29/grassy-narrows-mercury-disaster-a-form-of-environmental-racism.html
Shelburne, Nova Scotia	• What are the Social Determinants of Health? [Internet]. Canadian Public Health Association. [cited 2022 Jan 14]. Available from: https://www.cpha.ca/what-are-social-determinants-health • Nicola Seguin. Shelburn Activist tackles Environmental Racism with a new video.[Internet]. The Signal. [cited 2022 Jan 14]. Available from: https://signalhfx.ca/shelburne-activist-tackles-environmental-racism-with-new-video/ • Jonathan Ore. "A community of widows": How African-Nova Scotians are confronting a history of environmental racism CBC Radio [Internet]. CBC. 2018 [cited 2021 May 23]. Available from: https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/features/facing-race/a-community-of-widows-how-african-nova-scotians-are-confronting-a-history-of-environmental-racism-1.4497952

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Workshop Youth Assignment/Project Overview

The Workshop Youth Assignment/Project Overview is referring to a call to action or practical exercise that comes out of each workshop. The purpose of a specific assignment is to ensure we are providing youth with tangible ways to become better allies. **Our assignment is an extension of our 30 minute workshop and is to be done as “homework” by youth participants.**

Assignment: *Designing a hypothetical campaign*

Background

Do you think members of your community know that Canada has present-day instances of environmental racism? How can you share this information with individuals that might not know and motivate them to act? In our activity, we want you to design a hypothetical awareness and/or action(s) campaign that an environmental organization could do to help amplify the experiences and ‘asks’ of communities impacted by environmental racism.

Steps

Choose a Current Environmental Racism Issue

You can search for “environmental racism” via Google and click “News” to see if this term has been mentioned recently in reference to a current event. You can also visit some of these websites to begin to look into ongoing issues identified or amplified by these groups:

- [EcoJustice](#)
- [David Suzuki Foundation](#)
- [Shake Up The Establishment](#)

Choose an ongoing issue or current event related to environmental racism in what is currently Canada (or within a global context if you would like).

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Learn About Those Most Impacted

Identify What Their Recommendations/ Needs Are

After you identify a community or group you wish to help in the context of an environmental racism issue, find out how they are hoping to *be* helped. Many times, this means not centering you/ your group's voices but rather, following their asks. If needed, get in touch with a community contact and invest time into relationship-building to better understand their community's situation so you can provide contextually-appropriate, culturally-informed support. This can include, for example (but is not limited to): sharing their resources on this topic, working with them to co-design more educational/ awareness resources, fundraising for supplies they identify they need for their community, and/or creating a letter writing campaign to the political leaders to act on behalf of the community. **Find a way to catch up on what's been done, and what remains to be done, then summarize your findings in 1-2 paragraphs.**

Research to Find Community Leaders/ Representatives to Amplify

It is important to centre the experiences, stories, recommendations and asks of those who are directly impacted by the issue. Most of the time, individuals who have been historically excluded or oppressed are underrepresented when it comes to being seen as experts, being credited for ideas and/or being given a chance to speak for themselves. If the event or issue has received news coverage, oftentimes an individual representing the community will be quoted, and ongoing community-led efforts are highlighted. **Identify at least one person with one quote attributed to them that describes the impact of this situation on their community and/or what they are hoping is done to address this injustice.**

After you determine what the best way to be an ally to this community is, and who the trusted representatives of the community are/ what their perspectives on this issue are, you can proceed to the next step.

Design Your Action Item/ Determine Your Target Audience

Based on the chosen 'asks', simplify your campaign down to one main action item. You can always continue to support follow-up action items/ conduct more campaigns, but for now, let's pick one solid 'ask' that you want people to do. Based on this, choose who your target audience for this campaign is. For example, say that you are hoping to support the

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community by asking political leaders to take action in providing financial support for clean-up costs and for healthcare related costs incurred by the community as a result of exposure to environmental pollution. This would likely mean that you can organize a letter-writing campaign to your local member of parliament (MP). In this example, your target audience would be people who would be most needed to write these letters, so this would be people of all ages who live in your local community who have the same MP representing them. This is important to determine your target audience because you will cater your campaign's messaging and outreach strategies to maximize your impact in reaching people. **Summarize who your target audience is in 1-2 sentences.**

Create a Campaign Title/ Slogan

You can choose something as simple as "Support X community fundraise to get Y" or something more witty or playful depending on your target audience. Know that this will be how you will be publicly remembered, so try to go for something impactful. Some of the most successful campaigns have put a lot of thought into this because they know that it helps them go viral. **Come up with a clear title and a catchy slogan for your campaign.**

Identify Organizations and Groups to Amplify Your Campaign

One of the last major steps involved in campaigning is reaching out to people, organizations and community groups in your networks to share the campaign with, and to ask them to further amplify the 'asks' with their audiences to increase the impact and reach. Remember though, if your campaign aims to engage local residents, try to find groups or organizations locally as they will be the most impactful. **Identify 2-3 groups that make the most sense for you to share your campaign with.**

Bonus Action Item: Support Bill C-230 which is asking the Federal government to create a national strategy to redress environmental racism in Canada.

You can find ways to support this bill by visiting
enrichproject.org/support-environmental-racism-legislation