

Celebrating Black history through reflection and action ^[1]

Author: CECE, Joseph, D., Cummings-Morgan, N., & Armstrong-MacInnis, T.

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Excerpts

Black History Month is a time to recognize and celebrate Black individuals in Canada and around the world. It is also a time to have deeper conversations about ongoing systemic anti-Black racism that is rooted in colonialism. Today, these systems continue to impact Black communities. Some of these conversations challenge us to reflect and take action to confront the existing racial inequalities and economic disparities experienced by Black families and children.

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How does anti-Black racism show up in early learning education? How are Black children impacted by this?

Tonja: It shows up by folks in the field not recognizing their own biases and prejudices towards Black people – families and children. It shows up in microaggressions* and using words and phrases that are triggering, which can cause past traumas to resurface within a community that is supposed to be caring for those around them.

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You are the co-leads of the Community of Black ECEs. What led you to establish a group just for Black RECEs? What is the need this care collective is filling? What are some of your success stories with the group so far?

Nicole:

Establishing this community was based on what was happening in the world, but also because the AECEO was changing. In 2020 when George Floyd was murdered, I was a board member with the AECEO and, although the AECEO wanted to create a committee, I thought we should do more. We agreed to do more. Creating a group instead of a committee seemed more intentional and meaningful. I reached out to my fellow Black ECEs and they were good to go.

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Deirdra: I joined the group after a friend told me about the community. I started attending meetings during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was very helpful for me because I was laid off from work, and the murder of George Floyd was all over the news. I had no support or community to turn to except for the Community of Black ECEs. Having the support of others who were experiencing some of the same things that I was helped me feel that I was not alone. It also provided a safe space where I could freely express my anger, frustrations and concerns without having to explain the backstory of why I felt that way. The community also provided encouragement which solidified my decision to return to school to advance my skills.

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Related link: The erasure of Blackness and shortcomings within the early learning and care sector in Canada ^[3]

Building an anti-racist child-care system in Canada ^[4]

Anti-Black racism in the early years: The experiences of Black families and early childhood educators in Nova Scotia ^[5]

Region: Canada ^[6]

Tags: anti-racism ^[7]

decolonization ^[8]

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Links

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