“Go back to your f---ing country,” the white man screamed at the non-white man.

This outburst was caught on camera, not in post-Brexit England or post-election America, but on a streetcar in the middle of multicultural Toronto.

Lately, Canadian headlines teem with tales of hate crimes. In Edmonton, a family of Syrian refugees found their car doused in acid. An Ottawa rabbi awoke to find a swastika spray-painted on her door. An east Toronto neighbourhood was plastered with white supremacist recruitment posters.

Pundits explain this outbreak as a side-effect of the divisive American election, trickling north, the implication being: This kind of thing doesn't happen here. But Canadians must recognize that the problem starts much closer to home.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, Canada saw a massive growth in domestic white supremacist groups according to Alan Dutton, National Director for the Canadian Anti-Racism Education and Research Society. Dutton has been studying racist organizations and supporting victims of hate crimes for 30 years.

The tide turned in the 1990s, he says. Canadians, tired of hate groups operating publicly in their cities, protested to shut down the storefronts and meeting rooms where these groups gathered. Simultaneously, new legislation criminalized online hate messages. For almost a decade, hate groups withered and attacks dropped.

But in 2013, hate speech sections were removed from the Canadian Human Rights Act on the grounds they violated freedom of expression. Although a federal court declared the laws don't diminish freedom of speech, they were never reinstated. According to Dutton, this opened the door for hate groups to resume spreading their poison.

And as much as we want to blame America, Dutton adds, Canada's last federal election in 2015 was the real tipping point, with a divisive debate over the niqab. “[These arguments] licensed the expression of hatred in Canada again,” Dutton argues.

As a country and as Canadians we must take responsibility for our own values, actions and inactions, instead of blaming others.

So what can you do? Lots.

Intervene. If someone is hurling racist insults, step in. Ignore the attacker and chat with the victim, creating a safe space. Escort the victim to a place of safety if need be.

Report hateful posts. Repeat until they're removed. Show the tech companies running your feeds that you won't tolerate racism, sexism or homophobia.

File a report at StopRacism.ca if you witness online or in-person attacks, Dutton says. This empowers experts to track hate crime, identify offenders, and push authorities to take action.

Support anti-racist groups. There are many groups fighting hate in Canada like the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and B'nai Brith you can support by donating or volunteering.

Stand Up. Organize an anti-hate march or rally. Make a loud, public statement that hate is not welcome in Canada.

Write your Member of Parliament to take concrete action with legislation. Dutton suggests starting a conversation about reinstating hate speech laws.

Since the vitriolic US election, many outsiders have held up Canada as a model for tolerance. Let's make sure we remain role models.