COMMUNITY VOICES

ANTI-RACISM REPORT

JUNE 2021 // PREPARED BY DR. MICHELLE LAM, DENISE HUMPHREYS, AKECH MAYUOM, STEPHANIE SPENCE, & GRACE STONE

Report on the Community Voices: Inclusivity and Anti-Racism Event held virtually in Brandon, Manitoba

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This report presents (a) the themes that emerged from the breakout room discussions at the *Community Voices: Inclusivity and Anti-Racism* event held on March 26, 2021, and (b) the results of a systematic review of the relevant literature that is aligned to those themes.

The Community Voices Event and this report are the results of a collaboration between the Brandon Local Immigration Partnership (BLIP) and Brandon University, specifically, the BU CARES Research Centre, which promotes community-engaged research with Indigenous and rural community members.

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BU CARES RESEARCH CENTRE

Together, we can engage in meaningful discussions about belonging, anti-racism, and working together to build a community where everyone's voice matters.

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COMMUNITY VOICES
INCLUSIVITY & ANTI-RACISM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By Dr. Michelle Lam

There has been a significant increase in concerns surrounding racism in global and national contexts. Hate, violence, and extremism are visible in the media, and becoming politicized and polarizing topics. Recent research here in Manitoba has shown that our province is not immune to racist discourse and that many (over 80 percent) of Manitoba residents believe that racism is a problem in our province.

In light of the increasing focus, and in a desire to promote a community where everyone can feel they have a place to belong, the Local Immigration Partnership and BU CARES Research Centre launched the *Community Voices Project,* a series of in-depth conversations about inclusivity and anti-racism. This report details the outcomes of the first Community Voices event, which was held in March 2021.

The *Community Voices: Inclusivity and Anti-Racism* community conversation consisted of a two-hour virtual discussion, facilitated by Enver Naidoo of the Brandon Local Immigration Partnership and Michelle Lam, Director of BU CARES Research Centre. The event was attended by 125 participants, representing a broad range of community organizations such as education, health care, Indigenous community members, students, newcomers, and many others.

During the virtual event, participants were divided into 13 breakout rooms for deeper discussion, guided by experienced research facilitators and supported by research assistants from multiple faculties at Brandon University. The purpose of these discussions was to explore what it means to belong, to identify barriers to full belonging within our community, and to imagine together future possibilities of collaboration, support, and ways to work towards a community without racism.

This report is one of the major outcomes of the first *Community Voices* event. Specifically, this report will outline (a) the themes that emerged from the 13 group discussions, and (b) systematic reviews of literature that connects to these themes, as well as suggestions for ways forward.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2021, more than 125 educators, practitioners, Indigenous leaders, government officials, newcomers, students, and community members participated in an in-depth virtual discussion focused on belonging and anti-racism in Brandon, Manitoba.

"I was asking him how I can be a better advocate. And he simply said, 'I don't need you to be my voice. I have a voice. What I need is for you to pass me the mic and for you to give me that safe space."

- Community Voices Participant

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Community Voices project is to provide a space that encourages dynamic, interdisciplinary, multi-directional perspectives about inclusivity and anti-racism that can be compiled and analyzed to provide constructive and meaningful information back to participants and members of the community.

The discussion questions of this first Community Voices consultation were:

- Defining belonging and barriers
  - What does belonging mean to you?
  - What do you think we need to talk about in relation to acceptance and belonging in our community?
  - What challenges and barriers exist in working towards belonging?
- Looking to the future
  - What might be done to address these challenges? What opportunities can you imagine for supports or collaborations in our community to move forward?
  - How are you or your organization helping others to find a sense of belonging in our community? What else can be done?

FORMAT

The two-hour facilitated session involved:

- A welcome, land acknowledgment, and prayer by Spiritual Leader Frank Tacan
- A welcome from the city of Brandon by Mayor Chrest
- Introduction to the event by Enver Naidoo of the Brandon Local Immigration Partnership
- Ethics and respectful conduct and instructions by Dr. Michelle Lam of Brandon University
- Two rounds of 13 breakout room discussions, facilitated by Brandon University researchers and research assistants
- A wrap-up and next steps, and open Q & A session

Your Voice is IMPORTANT

With the rise of hate crimes, racism, and xenophobia in Brandon and communities across Canada, we need to engage with these issues to deepen our collective understanding to make positive change.

WHY WE NEED

ANTI-RACISM INFORMATION AND AWARENESS IN BRANDON

Brandon is the second-largest city in Manitoba, with a population of approximately 50,000, or 3.8% percent of Manitoba's population. It exists on Treaty 2 land, which is the traditional homelands of the Dakota, Anishinaabek, Cree, Oji-Cree, and Dene peoples, and the homeland of the Metis Nation. In addition to Indigenous and settler community members, Brandon also experiences significant new immigration, particularly in recent decades due to the foreign labour recruitment of a large-scale meat-packing plant. Although racism is not a new issue, there is a clear need for deeper local understandings about the issue, partly because research on racism tends to be housed in larger urban centres, and also due to increasing local concern about experiences of racism.

A local approach also allows for an exploration of possible avenues forward through collaboration. bringing together people from varied backgrounds, organizations, and agencies allowed for a robust discussion from multiple vantage points. While this single discussion is not the sum of knowledge about racism in Brandon, it is a starting place from which to grow, plan, and explore further. In future *Community Voices* discussions, we will build on what was learned from this initial conversation, leading through this cyclical process to clearer definitions about belonging, identification of barriers and challenges, ways to address these challenges, and opportunities for future directions.

COMMUNITY VOICES
INCLUSIVITY & ANTI-RACISM

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to further explore the themes that emerged from the breakout rooms, a systematic review of existing research was designed to locate, appraise, and synthesize existing and current information relating to those themes. The steps in this review were:

1. Screening databases with inclusion and exclusion criteria including context, dates, reliability, and source of the information.
2. Titles and abstracts were reviewed, and full papers obtained when the content of the research fit the inclusion criteria and relevance to the identified themes.

The key topics explored were:

- Language and definitions of belonging
- Current realities of racism in Manitoba and Canada
- Challenges and barriers related to racism and belonging
- Opportunities for coordinated approaches

Building on EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

By combining existing research with the themes from *Community Voices* conversations, we can link our knowledge to what is already known and further extend our own understandings.

WHAT IS RACISM?

"**Racism** is an ideology that targets some groups based on their ethnicity or phenotypic characteristics. Racism informs action by justifying the prejudicial attitudes and unfair treatment (discrimination) of individuals and institutions against racially defined groups" (Motz & Currie, 2018, p. 60).

Racism is normalized within society but not always recognized under Canada's guise of multiculturalism, which presents an image of Canada as welcoming of diversity while simultaneously engaging in processes that exclude minorities (Taylor et al., 2016). It is currently present in Canada and has been throughout its history (Frie, 2020; Phillips-Beck et al., 2020), and it works within institutions, such as healthcare (Phillips-Beck et al., 2020) and education (Schmidt, 2010) and manifests in ideas of nationalism, citizenship, and who belongs in Canada (Taylor et al., 2016). Moreover, racism can be overt, but is more often subtle and seen within actions and attitudes (Phillips-Beck et al., 2020). Discrimination based on race deeply affects minoritized communities, being linked to mental health issues (Janzen et al., 2017; Woodgate et al., 2017), intergenerational mistrust (Phillips-Beck et al., 2020), and reduced physical health and safety (Motz & Currie, 2018). Racism is also intersectional and affects communities differently based on other factors such as gender (Bundy, 2019; Janzen et al., 2017), health, or other conditions (Janzen et al., 2017; Woodgate et al., 2017).

COMMUNITY VOICES
INCLUSIVITY & ANTI-RACISM

Knowing where we are today

Helps us know where we want to go tomorrow

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection consisted of twenty-six recorded focus group (breakout room) discussions. During the event, participants were invited to discuss questions in small groups. These discussions were recorded, and assigned research assistants documented the discussions in case of recording failure. The recordings were transcribed, with personal information removed, and then the discussions were compiled for analysis. Altogether, we analyzed 183 pages (single-spaced) of transcription data from the breakout room discussions.

Data analysis consisted of two separate analytical processes. First, we coded and sorted textual data into themes, which form the structure of this report. Second, we used NVivo's qualitative data analysis word frequency software to look for repetitions of content words that frequently appeared in the text.

Findings from this data analysis process were summarized and are included in this report, along with stand-alone quotes from participants where appropriate.

COMMUNITY VOICES

WHAT IS BELONGING?

WHAT IS BELONGING?

Having a clear understanding of any goal is necessary in order for agencies and professionals to be able to chart a pathway to that goal.

According to Antonsich (2010), belonging is both an internal feeling that connects or attaches someone to a specific place and a social process whereby belonging is negotiated and granted to that person. Belonging is often viewed as self-explanatory and not clearly defined other than through its associations with identity and citizenship, but it has also been associated with gender, ethnicity, and emotional attachment. As an internal feeling, Antonsich suggests that belonging is a connection to a place that provides security, familiarity, and comfort (i.e., feeling at home), which can mitigate loneliness, isolation, and feelings of displacement. As a social process, belonging is political and involves the inclusion or exclusion of people to certain spaces. In order for people to feel like they belong, those that grant inclusion must also grant people the ability to express themselves, be recognized, and be valued in that space. Scholars have recently critiqued the idea of belonging as a fixed status and instead propose belonging as a socially constructed, continuous process.

In the Community Voices event, participants shared their own definitions of what belonging meant to them, and many discussed the lack of belonging they felt within Brandon. For example, one participant said, "*I've been nearly 5 years in Brandon and still feel very disconnected*;" another reported that they felt Brandon was very '"*cliquey*", and another compared living in Brandon to "*being on an island*". Participants shared that these feelings of social isolation were exacerbated during the pandemic.

In working towards a goal of belonging, participants shared their hopes for a community where they felt everyone belonged and the community relied on all its members. For example, one said, "*We can't get along without you*", and another said, "*When I think about belonging, I think about those spaces where every person who enters that space truly feels that the collective can't get along without them, that they are that their point of view, their voice, their experience is essential. Their happiness, their comfort is essential to everyone in that collective and in that group.*"

What is BELONGING?

Although the event was called *Community Voices: Inclusivity and Anti-Racism,* we chose to include a question about belonging in order to frame the question towards a positive goal.

BELONGING

In the *Community Voices* discussion, participants were asked to describe what belonging means to them through the Zoom Chat function. These words were compiled into the following graphic. Larger words represent those used more frequently.

What is BELONGING?

Although the event was called *Community Voices: Inclusivity and Anti-Racism,* we chose to include a question about belonging in order to frame the question towards a positive goal.

CURRENT REALITIES

OF RACISM IN MANITOBA

CURRENT REALITIES OF RACISM

Many participants noted the importance of addressing this issue in the community. This corresponds with research on racism in Manitoba, and in Canada more broadly.

Trends in studies on white supremacy recruitment show that white supremacist groups are attracting younger adherents, and they are on the rise in Canada (Wong et al., 2015). There are also concerning trends about racism in rural areas in Canada (Bundy, 2019; Janzen et al., 2017) and racism within Manitoba specifically (Lam & Humphreys, 2021; Phillips-Beck et al., 2020; Schmidt, 2010; Woodgate et al., 2017). There are also increasing hate crimes, and many of those are linked to race (Hager, 2020; Hager & Bailey, 2020).

Within the Community Voices discussion, there were many comments about both systemic racism and individualized racism. Participants specifically mentioned microaggressions, or "subtle acts of exclusion" (Jana & Baran, 2020), ignorance ("*a lot of the time, people don't mean wrong, they just don't know any better*"), stereotyping, gaslighting, making assumptions based on race, misinterpretations, and comments intended as compliments that were actually demeaning or based on stereotypes.

"Sometimes it's those little moments that goes unnoticed but still invalidates."
- Community Voices Participant

"I initially thought it was just me...but once you open up, you find more people - they have been through that same experience."
- Community Voices Participant

"Unfortunately, Brandon is part of that innately racist culture. There was a big conversation last year about Rosser Avenue and that was really eye opening, seeing the community butt heads about this."
- Community Voices Participant

What are CURRENT REALITIES?

CURRENT REALITIES OF RACISM

Systemic racism, which encompasses the "established laws, customs, or practices that are systematically reflected in and that produce racial inequities in society" (Phillips-Beck et al., 2020, p. 3; Taylor et al., 2016), was also commonly mentioned.

For example, one participant said, "*As a society, we take white men more seriously. And so, when there's two people to vote for, you're just like, I don't know, there's something about this guy that makes me want to trust him, because we've been told that's what trustworthiness looks like. The systems were created very intentionally to ensure that happened."* Another said, "*Our systems exist to keep people out."*

Specific ways that mentioned systemic racism were ways that systems excluded certain groups. Examples mentioned by participants included a lack of funding for things like anti-racist training in the non-profit sector; barriers due to funding requirements or mandates that did not cover particular groups; services that were only available to some, and gaps between those services; students streamlined into different classes; zoning laws; lack of credential recognition (work and education from other countries, or Indigenous experiences that aren't recognized in the current system); and barriers related to cost and time. These barriers will be explored further below.

"Racism is here in Brandon. Well, of course it's here in Brandon because racism is systemic. So it's embedded in our legislation; it's embedded in the judicial system; it's embedded in our health system; in our education system, and so we see barriers created within those systems and within those institutions."
- Community Voices Participant

"No matter which level of the society you belong to, it's [racism is] there."
- Community Voices Participant

"The more that we can learn and the more that we can understand the policies and things that have gone into this and the systemic injustices that are at play, the better we can talk about it and make steps towards getting rid of it."
- Community Voices Participant

What are CURRENT REALITIES?

CHALLENGES & BARRIERS

TO BELONGING & ANTI-RACISM

Analysis

BIPOC VOICES

Once all identifying details were removed from the transcripts, there were still many times that speakers identified themselves as Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour (BIPOC). By separating only those comments, the following insights were made:

SAFETY AND RISK

Multiple participants shared how spaces like the Community Voices event, filled with white people, can be a risk for safety. It can be hard sharing in spaces like these where there is a significant risk of backlash. Several participants suggested having advocates or allies step in to take on this risk themselves. For example, one said, "*for a person who is also a target of discrimination it is really hard to be the one calling out racism.*" Participants want an "ethical space of engagement", as Willie Ermine puts it, where their voices and lived experiences can be heard. Others suggested this safety risk is present in these conversations, but also in everyday situations. Some participants feel as if they are walking on eggshells trying to make sure they fit into the dominant culture, just to get by. And some participants said there is pressure there to conform for safety reasons, but they are continuing to learn to be confident in themselves.

EXHAUSTION

Participants shared that they felt exhausted constantly trying to filter themselves and for those who have to try and educate others as they exist in their identity. It is exhausting for participants to question themselves (self-gaslighting) or to have to address discrimination when they already have to live with it. Many suggested they feel their time would be best spent doing their own identity work and deal with caring for themselves to support themselves and their colleagues.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

When a community decides it wants to become more equitable, just, and anti-racist, what barriers might exist to pathways forward? Identifying and understanding the barriers and challenges can help in planning how to move forward as a community.

In the *Community Voices* event, common challenges and barriers mentioned included:

- **Demographic "bubbles"** - Many participants mentioned the prevalence of "silos", "bubbles", or other demographic segregation. This separation was felt at both systems and individual levels. For example, one participant said, "*We need to communicate with each other, with leaders and justice and education and health care, we need to communicate more because everybody's so divided."* Another said, "*Everybody's got different silos,"* and another said, "*Lots of people stay within their bubble."*
- **Power, accessibility, and cost** - Many participants discussed power differences. For example, people may not be able to re-arrange work schedules to come to a board meeting held at noon, and many recommendations for local relationship building (volunteering, sports, recreation, joining organizations, attending the Westman Multicultural Festival, etc.) involve some level of (emotional, social, and monetary) cost. The costs were also related to safety. For example, one participant said, "*Indigenous or People of Colour, we're scared every time we walk outside our doors."* Another participant recognized the disparity in comfort level by saying, "*My position gives me great power to feel comfortable enough to walk into any one of my [place of employment] because they are my [places], right? So I could go and talk to anybody. That's because I have power. If I were someone else, I might not feel that."*
- **Words and phrasing** - *Many people used "us and them" language when describing newcomers. This raises questions about who defines belonging and issues of power.* As Angela Carter wrote, "Language *is* power, life *and the* instrument *of* culture, *the instrument of* domination *and* liberation." Participants also raised questions about the language of 'inclusion,' 'local,' and 'diversity training.' One participant pointed out the "us and them" phrasing, and said, "*I won't call it our community, it's the community."*

What are CHALLENGES & BARRIERS?

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

- **Resistance to change** - Participants mentioned resistance or pushback when trying to educate, challenge stereotypes or create change. There were also examples within the data of resistance to the conversations within the *Community Voices* event. For example, there were examples of sidestepping the discomfort of the conversation by comparing to places where racism is worse, reframing the discussion to be about gender or an aspect of identity that includes them, and pointing out progress already made (common examples included personal involvement with charities, or how their organization had become more diverse). Literature shows that listening well and sitting with discomfort is an important aspect of growth (Frie, 2020). When discussing the past resistance to change, one participant stated: "*Indigenous cultures came to the table ready to share and teach. And if we had been open to learning, we could have had this beautiful culture that we missed out on because of what we did... we can't change the past, but we can start to learn now*."
- **Lack of accountability** - There were many comments in the data about the need for accountability. Many participants felt that there was significant value in opening spaces for further conversation, but that there was a danger of talking without meaningful change. For example, one participant said, *"It can't just be a parade here or a conference there - it has to be every day until people get used to it."* Although some participants recognized their own racism (*"I could identify as being racist"),* there were also comments about racism as a problem with *other people,* rather than taking responsibility to learn and grow. For example, participants said things like, "T*here are no racists in this group*," or *"There's 120 people who showed up, and I'm guessing everyone has a belief in this, but we need to get 120 racist rednecks to sign on*." These comments sidestep the discomfort of acknowledging racism present in the community. There can be significant discomfort that arises from admitting one's role within systemic racism's dominant structures (Frie, 2020; Parasram, 2019).
- **Ignorance** - Participants discussed the prevalence of stereotypes and misinformation. Some recognized their own ignorance, *"I don't know what I don't know,"* where others pointed to the hurtful impacts that others' ignorance had caused. For many, the suggested solution for this ignorance was education that focused on respect and increased understanding. This will be explored in further detail below.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR
WAYS FORWARD

SUMMARY OF KEY SUGGESTIONS

Based on common suggestions made by participants, the following sections describe opportunities for advancing anti-racism in the community.

Education

Within the broad theme of education, participants commonly mentioned:

All-encompassing anti-racism education

Participants mentioned a need for education at all levels (K-12, post-secondary, and within the community broadly).

There is a need for training for service providers, educators, healthcare workers, and community members in general to further anti-racism. Specific areas such as Indigenous knowledges, history, intergenerational trauma, cultural ways of being, and respect were all mentioned by participants. Participants named ways that their organizations had begun this type of education, some through workshops, events, courses, community forums, book clubs, and more. Other participants mentioned that they had learned some of this content through their children's curriculum at school, or pointed out the positive trends. For example, one participant said, "*Learning about the residential schools when I was growing up was very different experience from how they're teaching it in school now*." However, there was a broad acknowledgment that more was needed.

> **"I always believe that the change lies in education, right? Through education."**
> *- Community Voices Participant*

Opportunities for WAYS FORWARD

Education

Within the broad theme of education, participants also mentioned:

Education that honors Indigenous and Newcomer realities

There was an acknowledgment that the non-Indigenous community lacks awareness about Indigenous history and cultures. Similarly, many participants pointed out the lack of understanding about newcomer realities as well. This ignorance has deep impacts. For example, one participant said, *"Get people educated about their own stigmas,"* and another said we must, *"Have an educated understanding of each other."* Another participant pointed out the need for individuals to honor and value their own identities, *"I was taught that I was 'less than' because of who I am...And I feel like once I was able to look at my own identity, claim my identity and be proud of my identity, that it opened up a whole other thing for me. Now, I'm very proud of who I am. I'm proud to be Indigenous, I'm proud to call myself First Nation, Anishinaabeg."*

Multiple groups pointed to the need for newcomer-specific education about Indigenous realities. For example, one participant said, "*See, I'm a newcomer. I'm here for 10 years and I still need to learn the Indigenous cultures more.*"

Language education was also mentioned as an important aspect of the conversation. Participants mentioned honoring languages and reaffirming the importance of non-official languages.

Education that targets misinformation and stereotypes

As mentioned earlier, there is a desire for an anti-misinformation campaign to deal with harmful stereotypes and inaccurate information. For example, one participant said, "*We don't always know what's true and what's not*," and another said, "*Misinformation needs to be addressed*."

> **"Education is huge. A lot of people flinch at the word ignorant, but we're all ignorant of something."**
> *- Community Voices Participant*

Opportunities for WAYS FORWARD

Communication and Action

One of the unique qualities of the *Community Voices* event was the broad sector representation from multiple vantage points within the community. As such, it served as an expression of the wide community interest in the topic of anti-racism and has provided key insights into opportunities for coordinated approaches. Many participants stated that they valued the opportunity to engage in the discussion and wished for further developments.

There is a strong desire for both further conversation and meaningful, concrete actions. For example, one participant said, "*Lack of conversation is a big barrier to moving forward*." Under this theme, participants mentioned the need for a willingness to embrace discomfort, be vulnerable, counteract fear (such as the fear of saying the wrong thing, or the fear of being labeled), the need for these conversations to be accessible in terms of time, language, technology, and cost, and the need for honorarium and recognition for cultural groups or individuals who are sharing personal experiences and knowledge.

Participants desired more conversation around this topic but also expressed a concern that more conversations alone could be "*just lip service*." There was a desire for accountability and specific action. For example, one participant said clearly, *"There needs to be more accountability,"* and another said, "*It's like, OK, and now what do we do?*" To this end, specific recommendations for action that were mentioned by participants are included further in the report.

"What we're looking for is more of it - not just special events, not just because it's the week of anti-racism - there shouldn't always be something to motivate us to keep that momentum of moving in a good way."

- Community Voices Participant

"They say silence is violence."

- Community Voices Participant

Opportunities for WAYS FORWARD

Responsibility and Accommodations

There were clear themes around responsibility and accommodation. The definition of integration used by the Canadian government states, "*Integration is a two-way street process where both the host society and the newcomer adapt and benefit one other*." (Government of Canada, 2011). Many participants mentioned the need to shift the onus from newcomers adapting to a more shared approach. For example, one participant pointed out the problem of the prevailing thought, *"Some people [are] thinking, this is how we do it here, and you [newcomers] need to get familiar with us."* Another said, *"I'm trying to be cognizant of the responsibility to do the work and whose responsibility it is because the people who are marginalized are so tired of doing this work."*

One of the difficulties in moving towards anti-racism is that many of the suggested solutions require the invisible, uncompensated, and emotionally vulnerable labor of marginalized community members. However, participants mentioned many concrete ideas of ways they or their organizations had taken responsibility to work towards anti-racism. These are detailed further in the report.

"Your way of doing things is only one way of doing something."
- Community Voices Participant

"We [must] remove the onus on immigrants and put it back on the host community."
- Community Voices Participant

Pathways to Address Racism

Participants expressed a need for clear pathways to address racism. They described situations where they encountered racism but did not have the tools to know how to respond, or times when they tried to address racism but felt it was not successful. As one participant stated, "*Brandon can be extremely difficult to navigate if you speak out on behalf of [racist] things*." A 'toolkit' of strategies to address racism can be found in the appendix of this report.

"Accountability means how do we take our communities and hold them accountable, that we still want that standard of representation and equity and inclusion?"
- Community Voices Participant

Opportunities for WAYS FORWARD

Supports for Newcomers

While it was recognized that racism affects many people in the community, and particularly Indigenous community members (Janzen et al., 2017; Motz & Currie, 2018; Phillips-Beck et al., 2020; Woodgate et al., 2020), many participants also mentioned the need for support for newcomers, particularly the need for recognition of professional certification gained outside Canada, culturally appropriate, available, and adaptable services, and facilitation of longer-term relationships in and across cultural groups. There was also a need for clear communication about resources available.

"There has to be policy work that says it is your responsibility to understand what those services are and have that bridge between them, because in those moments, it's a community issue in those micro interactions that happen every single day."

- Community Voices Participant

Addressing Issues of Power, Ownership, and Control

Participants pointed out that embracing anti-racism involves careful consideration of issues of power, ownership, and control. This may mean critically thinking about the language used, as mentioned earlier in this report. Participants also mentioned examples such as how inviting people to the table/initiative/program/event is not enough, and there must be an acknowledgment of the many barriers to full participation, such as lack of safety, lack of access, cost barriers, scheduling conflicts, and whether the purposes of the table/initiative/program/event were collaboratively designed to meet the interests of the community group in the first place.

"What are the experiences, perspectives, life lessons that we can learn from each other for a better future? And are we really open to hearing those?"

- Community Voices Participant

Opportunities for WAYS FORWARD

CURRENT

LOCAL INITIATIVES

CURRENT LOCAL INITIATIVES

In a desire to acknowledge the good work that is already underway in our community and to open up possibilities for further collaboration across sectors, one of the questions in the *Community Voices* event asked about current initiatives.

Effectiveness can be limited when important knowledge remains isolated in the silos of individual offices, organizations, agencies, etc. By bringing together cross-sector representation and asking what is currently being done to work towards belonging and anti-racism in our community, we were able to compile positive examples of communities and individuals embracing anti-racism in Brandon, Manitoba. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of some of the work already underway that was put forward as positive examples from participants.

"I don't know how many businesses really understand what's available out there. I was fortunate enough to get to do a walk through the Westman Immigrant Services last year and I was amazed at what they could offer."

- Community Voices Participant

"Individually we do these things, interpreters, programs, that's all important. But how do we work smart at an organizational level so that we're all putting forth a concerted effort?"

- Community Voices Participant

Personal Growth Initiatives

Many participants described the personal growth they experienced by embracing vulnerability and humility and going "*outside their comfort zone*."

Participants also shared times when they had been involved in interactions that were characterized by **humility**. Sometimes they were the ones being educated, either through volunteering with different groups or through direct intervention. For example, one participant said, "*I've had close friends who have spoken up and said, 'when you said it like this, this is what it sounded like to me,*" and other times it was when they educated others but the person did not respond with defensiveness or anger.

Community Initiatives

Participants shared initiatives and movements towards anti-racism and belonging that they felt were places of **hope**. For example, some parents discussed how their children had been learning anti-racism at school, such as students creating legacy posters for Black History Month. Several participants pointed out the difference between school curriculums when they had been students that didn't acknowledge the history and legacy of residential schools in Canada, and what their children were learning now. At the same time, many acknowledged that there was still a "*long way to go*." Participants were also encouraged by seeing concrete changes in policies such as HR and diversity and inclusion, the powerful message of love and forgiveness after the tipis were vandalized at Brandon University. Although participants mentioned many organizations and programs by name, one commonality in the praise given was that they provided services in an intersectional way, with a personal and individual approach being valued or desired. For example, one participant said, *"When we talk about resources and all of that, and, of course, we need all of that, but how can it be really tailored to the needs of a family or tailored to the needs of an individual with enough follow-up. [We need to] to accompany someone, you know, in their path and growth,"* and another said, "*We might have access to services and support, but that doesn't mean we have that personal connection."*

Participants mentioned learning new ways of doing something or seeking out further information and resources through local organizations about cultural histories, teachings, and ceremonies. They mentioned learning about other cultures through participating in community events, programs, groups, or organizations, and building community partnerships. Participants also mentioned books and book clubs where they learned about issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. (For books recommended by participants, see the Appendix).

Current local INITIATIVES

DISMANTLING OR PERPETRATING?

As a further level of analysis, the data was sorted according to the direction and impact that particular actions had.

Actions dismantling racism

These actions could be seen at both individual and community levels. For example, participants mentioned recognizing an imbalance of power and transferring it, giving voice, self-reflection, and critically thinking about interactions. Participants also mentioned patience, acceptance, and kindness, celebrating diversity, creating safe spaces, denouncing hate, calling people in, educating about truth, and supporting ongoing initiatives. They also mentioned the power of education, as mentioned earlier in the report.

Actions which perpetrate racism

Participants mentioned particular actions that were viewed as being harmful or perpetuating racism. They mentioned experiencing cultural barriers or having to "*reconfigure*" themselves to feel like they fit in, a desire to move away from inclusion towards acceptance, dealing with gaslighting or second-guessing for BIPOC people, ignorance and excuses, and damaging language use.

Embracing differences

Participants shared many beautiful examples of what can happen when diversity is embraced:

- Work collaborations leading to creativity, effectiveness, and innovation
- Sharing food and learning from one another
- Coming together to stand against hate
- Solidarity, friendship, and support between BIPOC community members

Current local INITIATIVES

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Suggestions for Action

Participants in the *Community Voices* event had many ideas for concrete action. Their ideas are listed below:

- **Grassroots approaches**
  Participants suggested neighborhood or backyard cultural days, where neighbors share with neighbors. They also suggested things like cooking classes, barbeques, meet-and-greets, and emphasized grassroots and local approaches.

- **Facilitating connections and addressing barriers**
  Participants discussed creating more accessibility by bringing council members, institutional leaders, or others to common spaces such as the downtown park or soup kitchen to share a meal and conversation. Participants also discussed facilitating opportunities for newcomers to make connections, such as facilitating connections with community or cultural organizations, volunteering, or finding shared interests. Recognizing that these connections often rely on volunteer labor, participants suggested creating paid positions, shifting time for meetings, leveraging technology to address barriers, and conducting a volunteer auction (*"time-raiser")* as a way to provide the experience of volunteering. For those in positions of power, participants mentioned the need to provide pathways & invitations to participation, actively working to remove barriers to full participation. For example, calls for new board members could be offered in multiple languages, barriers to accessibility and cost could be creatively addressed, and a safe environment that values all voices must be shared.

- **Multicultural festival expansion**
  Many groups discussed and appreciated the Westman Multicultural Festival (formerly called Lieutenant Governor's Winter Festival and Brandon Winter Festival), and some groups mentioned expanding the initiative and/or including a summer option.

Suggestions for Action

- **Incentives**
  Recognizing that engaging with anti-racism involves some risk, as described earlier, participants mentioned a desire for incentives such as bonus points for students, or some other way to incentivize action.

- **Learning hub**
  As described earlier, many participants expressed a desire for further education and the need for spaces in which to have in-depth conversations about topics such as racism. While *Community Voices* is one such vehicle for these spaces, a more in-depth and ongoing conversation is desired. A learning hub was put forward as a way to harness the momentum of these initiatives within one place. Ensuring that documents are translated and easily accessible would be possible through such a hub. At all levels, providing education in anti-racism, specifically addressing Indigenous histories, cultures, and the effects of intergenerational trauma, and the needs and challenges of newcomers for all levels of employees, is a concrete action step.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

Further Analysis

WORD FREQUENCY

Using NVivo qualitative research software, we ran a word frequency analysis to determine the most commonly used words in the transcripts. After filtering out non-content words (filler words like 'and,' 'or,' then,' etc.) the following words appeared over 100 times:

WORD	COUNT	WEIGHTED PERCENTAGE
Community	457	1.26%
Need	337	0.93%
Different	289	0.80%
Talk	287	0.79%
Participation	271	0.75%
Feel	233	0.64%
Belonging	225	0.62%
Learning	167	0.46%
Cultures	155	0.43%
Help	145	0.40%
Conversation	139	0.38%
Education	138	0.38%
Barriers	136	0.38%
Sharing	132	0.36%
Challenges	130	0.36%
Change	118	0.33%
Systems	114	0.31%
Experiences	114	0.31%
Indigenous	102	0.28%

Moving Forward

IN SUMMARY

The *Community Voices: Anti-Racism and Inclusivity* event was one that sparked broad interest within the community. Many people mentioned a desire for space for further discussion and connection. Within this theme, people mentioned the need for listening to one another, sharing stories, building trust, building relationships, taking time for one another, and the need to include a broad range of people. Sports and art were both mentioned as powerful ways to facilitate connections across groups.

The next steps of the project involve another event, this time more in-depth with topic-specific breakout rooms related to the content of this report, as well as seeking funding for a longer-term initiative for community-based action research on the topic of creating social change for inclusivity and anti-racism.

Each of these conversations can become a small step in a good direction. And just as the effects of microaggressions cumulate over time to have significant detrimental effects, so also can small steps of hope, courage, vulnerability, strength, and love become cumulative, working towards anti-racism and belonging.

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APPENDIX A

ABOUT US:

BRANDON LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

Brandon Local Immigration Partnership (Brandon LIP) is the mechanism through which Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) supports the development of local partnerships and community-based planning around the needs of residents and newcomers. The Brandon LIP seeks to engage various stakeholders, including employers, agencies, and community organizations, to act as an incubator for ideas, measure trends, identify needs and mobilize the appropriate community resources to meet those needs.

BU CARES RESEARCH CENTRE

BU CARES Research Centre is an applied research institute of the Faculty of Education at Brandon University. Its role is to promote and facilitate research activities that are of interest to rural, northern, and Indigenous communities, school divisions, and related organizations. The Centre also offers research support and networking opportunities for researchers actively involved in Indigenous and rural education research.

APPENDIX B

Resources to Address Racism

The following websites contain many helpful resources to address racism:

https://www.brandonu.ca/diversity/resources/

https://experiencescanada.ca/resources/anti-racism-resources/

https://www.respectability.org/resources/racism-unconscious-bias/

https://www.ucalgary.ca/equity-diversity-inclusion/education-and-training/anti-black-racism

https://uwaterloo.ca/human-rights-equity-inclusion/anti-racism

https://www.mcgill.ca/equity/resources/anti-racism-resources

http://psacunion.ca/anti-racism-resources

https://www.ncfr.org/news/resources-address-racism-and-racial-violence
https://bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=21354

https://tryingtogether.org/community-resources/anti-racism-tools/

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/video/implicit-bias

APPENDIX C

Books Recommended by Participants

Although there are many great resources available, the following were resources specifically mentioned by participants:

Highway of Tears by Jessica McDiarmid

White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo

The Power of Vulnerability by Brené Brown

Pulling Together Learning Series from BCcampus, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training, and a Steering Committee of Indigenous education leaders

21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act by Bob Joseph

How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi