



Growing Culturally Inclusive Communities

Report

July 2024

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FUNDER



PARTNERS



1. Introduction

Rural communities all have unique histories, people, migration patterns, resources, and environments that shape the community. At the same time, there are commonalities across these communities: A colonial settlement history left residual ideological, cultural, societal, economic systems with prevalent power imbalances that are still prevalent today. Additionally, the communal spaces where relationships can grow or wither are inundated with competing perspectives which either give rise to the dominant masses or suppress marginalized and further disenfranchise others.

This is the story of two communities—Strathmore, AB, and Temiskaming Shores, ON—where residents face multiple barriers, including racism and discrimination. It's a tale of resilient individuals striving to embrace their true identities and have their voices heard. This story also highlights how rural communities can transform spaces to support diverse populations.

Through this work, the project team explored:

1. Racism and discrimination experiences in two communities.
2. The places in the community that discrimination occurred.
3. The ways that rural communities might transform these spaces into places that people can come together, build relationships, learn, and grow.
4. Possible opportunities, resources, and approaches that might support rural communities to make steps towards overcoming racism and discrimination based on wisdom shared by community members.



2. Origin Stories

Inciting Incident in the Town of Strathmore, AB

In March 2019, Kakato'si Kristian Ayoungman, a 24-year-old male hockey player and a champion powwow dancer from the Siksika nation, was shot to death while he and his friends were in a vehicle being chased down a rural highway between Strathmore and Siksika in Southern Alberta. He was killed after having an argument over a few missing cigarettes. His death forced the rural community to confront racism.

The town of Strathmore is the ancestral home of the Blackfoot. It was incorporated as a town in 1911. It is approximately 50 kms east of Calgary, a significant distance so it has developed its own amenities that include many grocery stores, larger retail stores like Wal-Mart and Canadian Tire, a hospital, recreation centres and over 50 km of pathways including a paved loop around Kinsmen Park and the wetlands at Grays Park. The town, an agricultural community, is a typical western town with a rodeo and love of hockey. The faith community is significant in Strathmore with approximately 26 churches.

Truths in Temiskaming Shores, ON

Archaeological digs have shown that Indigenous people were living in Temiskaming Shores since 6000-500 BC. Indigenous communities developed along Temiskaming Shores. Around 1896, the communities in modern day Temiskaming Shores amalgamated due to the fur trade. Mining soon boomed in the area attracting wealthy European mine owners who took over the area through brute force. Local Indigenous people were then pushed to the end of town or right out of town to Reserves in the Temiskaming District. In the 1990's, more newcomers began to migrate to the area, creating further diversification.

Temiskaming Shores is the traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples, with a well established Anishinaabe and Metis community, on Robinson-Huron treaty land (Treaty 61, 1850). It is an amalgamation of three towns - New Liskeard, Haileybury, and Dymond - located 510 km north west of Ottawa. Locals and nearby towns, including small farming towns, frequent the local Wal-Mart, retail stores, restaurants, and several recreational amenities and activities. The City serves as a service and commercial hub to the large agricultural, forestry and mining region. Today, Temiskaming Shores has diversified, however there is still hidden and outward racism everywhere. The One Light Diversity Centre, Keepers of the Circle Indigenous Hub, and other local organizations work to address this locally.



Photo context: Candlelight vigil in Strathmore's Kinsmen Park on March 19, 2019 to honour the memory of Kristian Ayoungman

3. History, Culture, and People

Strathmore, AB

- **Location:** Approximately 50 km east of Calgary.
- **Population:** 14,339 (2021 Census).
- **Demographics:** Predominantly white community with an Indigenous population of 6.6% and immigrants 8.9%.
- **Economy:** Agricultural with local amenities such as grocery stores, retail stores (Wal-Mart, Canadian Tire), a hospital, and recreational facilities.
- **Cultural Background:** Significant faith community with 26 churches
- **Top three immigrant birthplaces:** Filipino (3%), South Asian and Black (both at 1.2%) and Chinese (0.6%).
- **Religious demographics:** Christians (48.2%), Hindus (0.3%), Other religions and spiritual traditions (0.6%), Sikhs (0.5%), Buddhist (0.1%) Muslims (0.1%), Jews (0.1%), Traditional spirituality (0.1%), and locals who are not religious (49.9%).

SOURCE: 2021 CENSUS CANADA

Temiskaming Shores, ON

- **Location:** 510 km northwest of Ottawa, 30 km from the Quebec border.
- **Population:** 9,634 (2021 Census).
- **Demographics:** Indigenous people make up 9.2% of the population; immigrants make up 3.6%.
- **Ethnic origins:** 24.3% French, 22.5% English, 20.5% Canadian.
- **Top three immigrant birthplaces:** USA and India (tied at 17.9%), United Kingdom - 16.4%, China - 9%.
- **Indigenous population:** 9.2%
- **Religious demographics:** Christians - 63.9%, Hindus - 0.7%, Other religions and spiritual traditions - 0.6%, Sikhs - 0.5%, Muslims - 0.2%, Buddhists - 0.2%, Jews - 0.1%, Not religious - 33.8%.
- **Economy:** Serves as a commercial hub for agriculture, forestry, and mining.
- **Cultural Background:** Traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples with a history of Indigenous displacement.

SOURCE: 2021 CENSUS CANADA



4. What We Did

To comprehend experiences of racism and assess efforts in addressing it within both communities, the following approach was taken:

a. Local Community Partnership

One key community partner in each community was consulted to develop the approach and support the project.

b. Surveys and Interviews

To understand experiences of racism and evaluate efforts in addressing it within both communities, surveys were created in collaboration with key local community partners and distributed over a **20-week period from June 14 to October 31, 2023**. Due to a lower-than-expected response rate, interviews were also conducted. In Strathmore, interviews were conducted through snowball sampling, while in Temiskaming Shores, a call for participation was made via posters. CCIS conducted the interviews but had doubts about their eligibility, as noted in the final report. Some interviewees provided vague, inconsistent, and unclear answers, and turned off their cameras, raising several flags and concerns.

SURVEYS:

STRATHMORE:
34 PARTICIPANTS

TEMISKAMING SHORES:
21 PARTICIPANTS

INTERVIEWS:

STRATHMORE:
18 INDIVIDUALS

TEMISKAMING SHORES:
3 INDIVIDUALS

c. Presentations and Community Conversations

To harness the expertise of locals and the broader community, we hosted:



2 COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS



2 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



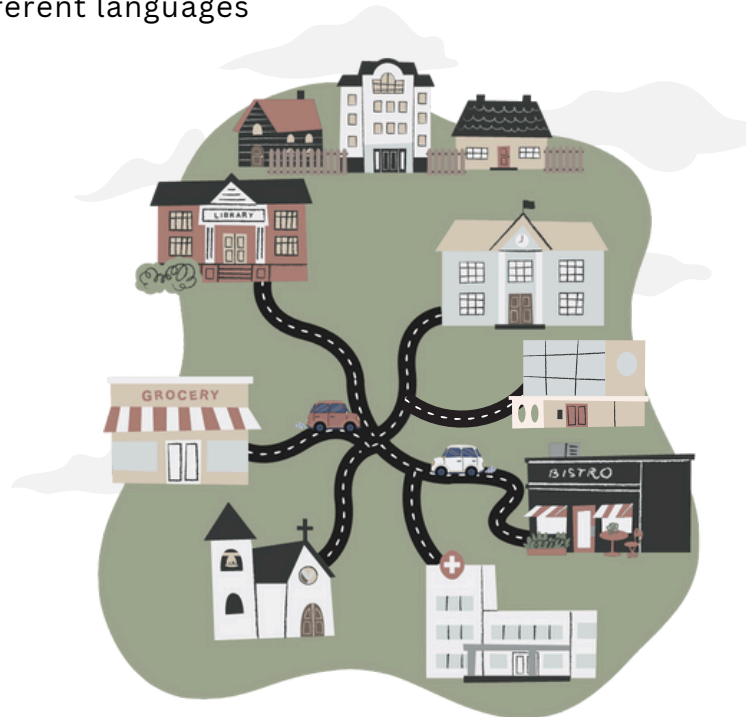
2 CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

5. What We Heard

Small towns like Strathmore and Temiskaming Shores have many common spaces such as libraries, schools, and restaurants, where instances of racism and discrimination have been observed or experienced. However, these spaces also have the potential to promote inclusivity and healing.

What racism looks like in Strathmore and Temiskaming Shores:

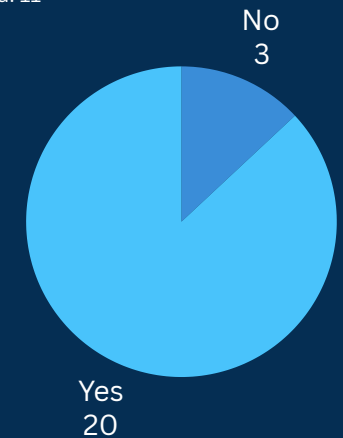
- Racism and discrimination is an ongoing problem.
- Discrimination happens in many different places in our communities
- Discrimination happens to many different groups in these small towns:
 - Indigenous
 - People who spoke different languages
 - Women
 - Elderly
 - Ethnic Groups
 - Sexual diversity
 - Farmers
 - Hutterites
 - Newcomers
 - Minorities



Experienced or knows someone who experienced racism:

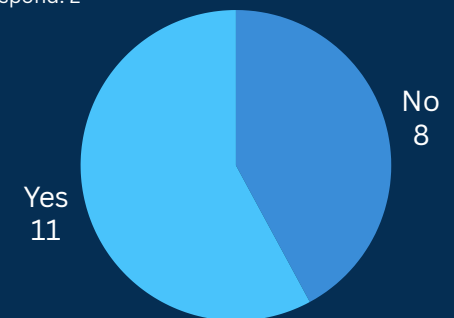
Strathmore

Didn't respond: 11
n=34

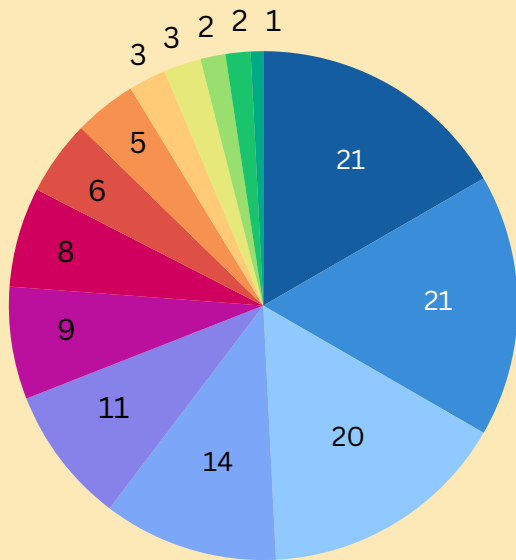
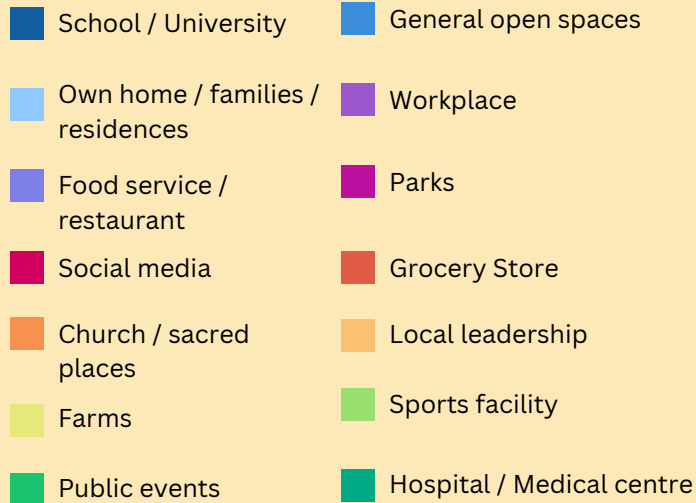


Temiskaming Shores

Didn't respond: 2
n=21



In both surveys and interviews, we asked where they have experienced or observed racism. Below shows the number of times respondents mentioned these places.



“Minorities report being regularly targeted by security in stores.”

“In rural communities, it doesn't matter if there's too many natives standing on the street, then sure enough, the fire, the RCMP are going to come by, and they're going to talk to us, because there's just too many of us on the street. We can be just standing there, visiting, seeing each other, being happy with each other, and we get harassed.”

“We have a very active Facebook page here in the community. And within that Facebook page I've seen on multiple occasions and had to report comments that have been left there.”

“Had a death and as Indigenous like to have an elder say a prayer. Went to church but the priest said no in practicing their culture (honor song with the drum and to sing). There is also set time. We don't just rush our funerals and our wakes because it's saying goodbye to someone they dearly love. And we don't want to just race them to the ground and that's it. So being respectful to our ways as well, because we are trying to be respectful to their ways. When coming into their church and we sit down and we are quiet and we pray and we listen to the priest, they should still allow us to do some of our traditions as well. They are excluding our traditions.”

“Competent staff was let go because the fast food restaurant took advantage of hiring temporary foreign workers (TFWs).”



“A community member went to an office to receive service. The service attendant ignored them and refused to provide service. They walked away from the desk. When pushed to explain their actions, the attendant said: “I rather eat poison and die than to use my hand to serve somebody like you.” Then, police were called and the community member and attendant were called outside.”



“An Indigenous gentleman who would run around upstairs on our track at our sports center, and he would always stay late into the evening. And people would just comment like, “Oh, watch out! He's gonna do something illegal” when really he was just there to run. They would never say that about any other lone man or woman upstairs.”



“I have heard young people saying insensitive things or not including other youths in events due to race”



“We see at the tree farms where they have foreign workers coming in. They work very well together because they do have that ability to speak their own language. So of course, they're going to be speaking that. You know they've been hired and meet the skill requirements. So they're here doing their job and their job isn't necessarily always to have to be learning English. But then, if you have someone who's local, and they're speaking English, only then they get very frustrated and racist comments come from them feeling excluded and not being able to you know, fit in”

Local Community Assets to Combat Racism and Discrimination

What is working well in Strathmore and Temiskaming Shores

- The library is “a real strength in our community.”
- Programs like the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) in Alberta are an integral part of unifying
- Schools have potential to share knowledge
- Regular trainings but need more creativity.



“I believe that the town has already given many opportunities to remove these barriers. It is up to the citizens to use these knowledges for the betterment of the community.”

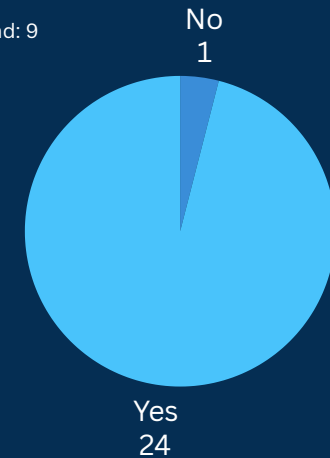
People believe there is room for growth and improvement:



“There is still room for my town and the neighbouring communities to improve in how we address discrimination and racism.”

Strathmore

Didn't respond: 9
n=34



Temiskaming Shores

Didn't respond: 1
n=21



6. Leveraging the Expertise of the Communities

The project team worked with residents of Strathmore and Temiskaming Shores to identify the path forward in their communities. In the surveys, residents were asked how they thought their towns could be more welcoming and inclusive, and how they might address racism. In the community conversations, residents were asked which places in the community might people come together and heal. Then they were asked what people were currently experiencing in those spaces, and whether or not this needed to shift. The following pages summarize the wisdom from local residents.

Current State



Future State?



When asked for recommendations for building more welcoming and inclusive town and neighbouring towns, residents focused on increased representation, access to resources, education, and advocacy.

INCREASED REPRESENTATION

- “The Town and local businesses should hire proportionately to the representation we see in the population of the various racial groups” - more people of color in workplace settings, health offices, non profit, and government; more involvement of the Indigenous community.
- Represent all communities through art, marketing and representation in businesses.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

- Make sure that Indigenous peoples, newcomers and locals have access to existing resources.

EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

- Campaigns, supportive programs, and education.
- More community education on culture and immigration policy and practices.

When asked “How can the community engage in addressing racism”, residents of Strathmore and Temiskaming Shores suggested many action-based and gentle approaches:

- Cross-cultural learning opportunities.
- Education activities to better understand other religions and cultures.
- Community can collaborate with local organizations, schools etc. to promote anti-racism initiatives, they can also sponsor events or programs that celebrates diverse cultures and histories.
- Awareness about racism, its history and its impacts on society.
- Encourage open and honest conversations and ensure diverse representation and community leadership organizations.
- Opportunities for intermingling without being overt that the interventions are meant to address racism.
- Multicultural events, featuring food, dress, with any culture.
- Model accepting behavior and mannerisms.
- Patronize businesses run by different nationalities.
- Encourage engagement of minority communities through employment, volunteer programs and community events.
- Come together as a whole to support each other.

The next two pages list more recommendations and are the visual notes that were taken from our two community conversations.

Growing A Culturally Inclusive Strathmore

April 25, 2024

FUNDER:



Canadian Race Relations Foundation

EVENT PARTNERS:



ROCKY VIEW & WHEATLAND LIP



A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Which places in our community have the potential to bring us together to connect and heal?

“WHEN WE COME TOGETHER THAT’S WHEN WE ARE STRONGEST”

UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS

LISTEN TO OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES

WHAT WOULD Kristian Ayoungman SAY TODAY?

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS?

What are we experiencing in these spaces, and what do we need to shift?

WELCOME TO STRATHMORE



FARMERS MARKET

TOWN HALL

SCHOOLS

CHURCHES
RELIGIOUS GATHERING SPACES

PUBLIC SPACES

LIBRARY

EVENTS/
PROGRAMS

CEREMONY

RODEO

LUNAR
NEW YEAR
FESTIVAL

CANADA
DAY

HEART
of the
Community

Multicultural
Centre

Community
Centre

EMOTIONAL
SPACE

Centre
for ALL

WHO IS IN
OUR COMMUNITY?

Connect
and
Heal

New Residents
might feel...

INTIMIDATED

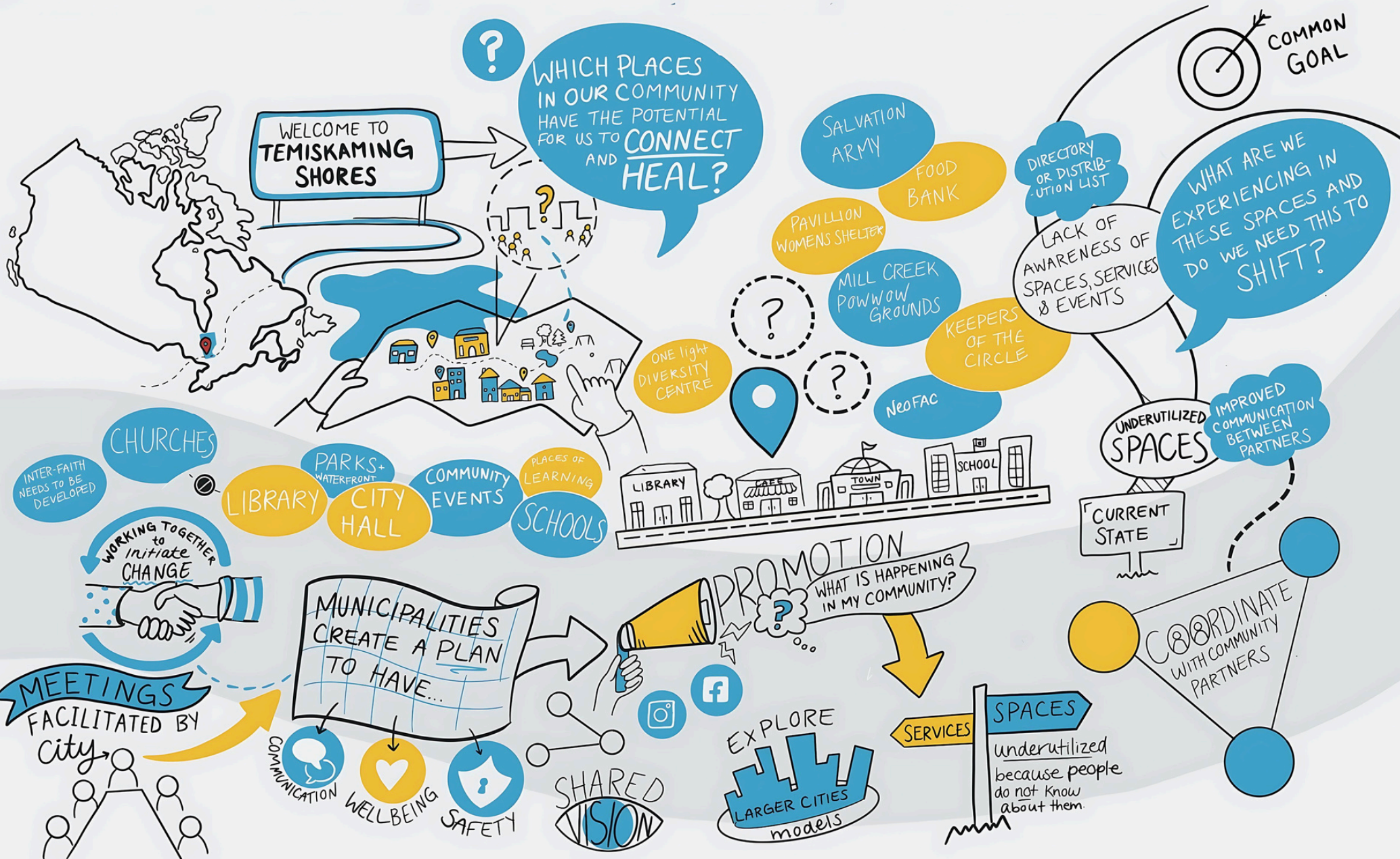
at these
events/spaces

GROWING A CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE TEMISKAMING SHORES

FUNDER:



EVENT PARTNERS:



7. Potential Opportunities and Resources That Could Support Rural Communities

a. Resources for individual residents to reflect on current experiences and future learning

Do you think biases, prejudices, and racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors affect how you respond to others? Do you think they are present in your community? Select a category below that aligns with your standing. Wherever you find yourself, there is an opportunity for growth and education. Each section offers resources to enhance our attitudes, skills, knowledge, and awareness.

Your experience ...

- I believe racism is impossible.
- I don't talk about racism.

- I recognize that racism occurs.
- I feel uncomfortable to speak up about it.

- I am hesitant to respond to racism but want to support those affected.
- I notice that others are starting to speak up, report incidents, or supporting victims of racism.

I am welcoming and responsive to racism when I see it in my community.

I feel safe going everywhere in the community because locals, including most or all of them, have fostered an inclusive environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

... Learning and growing from there.

Learn to address discrimination when faced with it
pg. 18

Learn about myths and facts
pg. 16

Build a Community Approach
pg. 19

Learn more about discrimination that happens in our communities
pg. 18

Learn about how to create safe spaces and brave spaces
pg. 15

Have conversations with people in your community who might have different experiences from you
pg. 18

b. Learn About How to Create Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces; Having Community Conversations

This is a list of Community Agreements that was co-created by CCRL and conversation groups. What guidelines and/or agreements does your community need/want to create safe and brave spaces?

- Share your perspective at your own comfort.
- Listen and speak with respect
- Listen deeply (especially when someone shares a viewpoint that is very different from a deeply held value)
- Speak with your heart
- Take a breath before we jump into respond
- Listen actively. Engage with ideas rather than formulate a response.
- Create space for others. If you speak up often, hold back and offer others a chance.
- Respect silence. It may relate to the right to pass or a process in reflection.
- Discussion is a process. Perfection is not necessary.
- Prepare to learn and push yourself to consider new ideas and perspectives.
- There are no stupid questions
- Remember: Everyone is on a different learning journey
- No recordings; conversations are confidential
- Respect one another, which includes speaking in ways that are not hurtful and standing up for one another
- Respect people's bandwidth (energy and internet)

Safe Spaces:

- ***Do not judge based on identity***
- ***Allow expression without fear***
- ***Provide support without pressure to educate***

Brave Spaces:

- ***Encourage dialogue***
- ***Hold individuals accountable***
- ***Can be uncomfortable but lead to new understanding***
- ***Embracing Different Spaces***

learn more: <https://medium.com/@elise.k.ahen/safe-and-brave-spaces-dont-work-and-what-you-can-do-instead-f265aa339aff>

c. Learn about Myths and Facts

The Utility of Myths and Facts:

- Correcting Misinformation
- Promoting Awareness
- Encouraging Dialogue
- Reducing Stereotypes
- Empowering Individuals
- Building Empathy
- Supporting Policy Change
- Encouraging Inclusive Behaviors

Examples of myth and facts:

Myth / Fact?

Temporary foreign workers take away jobs from locals.



It is a **MYTH**.

In 2022, immigration accounted for **75% of population growth** in Canada, and **100% of Canada's labour force growth**. TFWs often fill labour shortages in sectors with a lack of local skilled labour or willingness to perform specific jobs. They complement, rather than compete with, the local workforce.

Myth / Fact?

All religions are the same.

It is a **MYTH**.

Many religions have common practices and values, but each religion is distinct.



Why is it important to care for the environment?

How do people pray and/or meditate? Why?

Why is it important to care or love other people and living beings?

These questions are answered differently by different groups because each religion is grounded in its unique teachings and histories. Sometimes, the teachings may appear the same, but they are discussed or described from a different perspective.

More examples of myth and facts:

Myth / Fact?



Religions only lead people to do harm. Nothing good comes from it.

Fact: Religious people have done harmful things. But, it is a **MYTH** to say that nothing good comes from religion.

Worldviews (religious, spiritual, and non-religious) impact all parts of society, negatively and positively.

For example, Christian clergy and politicians established the Indian Residential School System in Canada based on their religious and political objectives. This has harmed generations of Indigenous Peoples in the areas of education, employment, healthcare, housing, crime, etc. This reality continues to shift, and more and more Christians are speaking up against this historical harm.

Likewise, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh leaders, among others, have established many hospitals, foodbanks, and social services in Canada that help everyone beyond their own religious community. They also volunteer for many tasks. This reminds us that nothing is static or one-sided.



Clockwise: Jewish General Hospital in Montreal, a Halifax Muslim volunteer supporting food donations, the co-founder of Guru Nanak's Free Kitchen providing hot meals during the pandemic in Surrey.

Myth / Fact?

All Indigenous People are the same.

It is a **MYTH**.

In Canada, Indigenous Peoples include the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples. Just as Canadians are similar but not all the same, it is incorrect (and can be harmful) to assume that all Indigenous People are the same.



These images show Indigenous Peoples from different backgrounds and experiences (clockwise):

- Members of the Métis Nation British Columbia
- Dorothy Grant, internationally renowned fashion designer and traditional Haida artist
- Indigenous athletes preparing to compete at the North American Indigenous Games
- Chief Michael Stickman and Chief Bill Erasmus from the Arctic Athabaskan Council

d. Learn to address discrimination when faced with it

Resources:

1. [Consumer racial profiling](#) (Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, 2022) - What does it look like and how it is harmful
2. [Indigenous Racial Profiling by Retailers](#) (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2017) - Videos and info to understand what it looks like and tips for how to respond or prevent it

e. Learn more about discrimination that happens in our communities

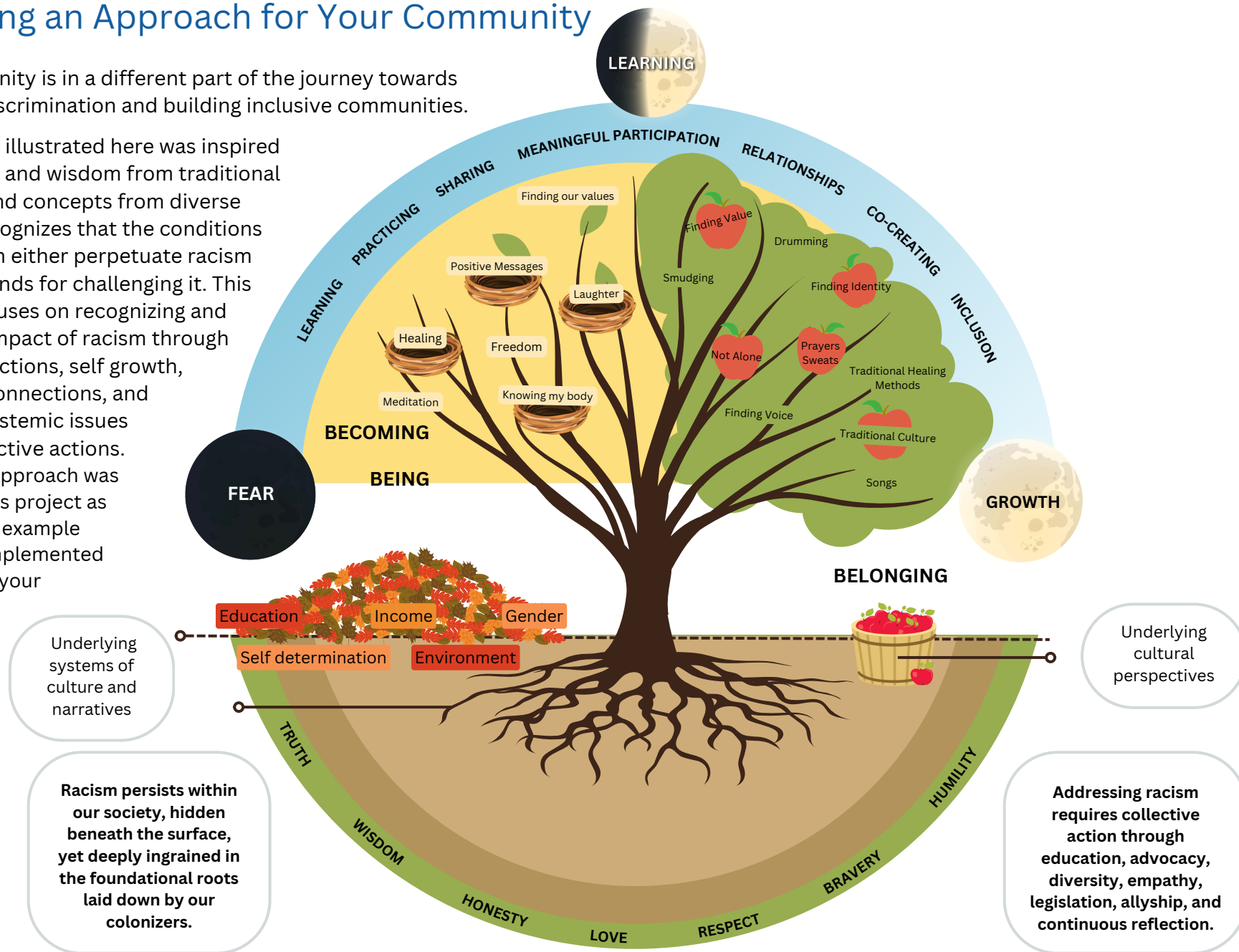
Resources:

1. [Black and Indigenous peoples often profiled in stores, banks, and restaurants \(Statistics Canada, 2019\)](#)
2. [Combating Hate: Islamophobia and its impacts on Muslims in Canada \(The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2023\)](#) - Details to understand what is happening in Canada and a story about how a Muslim mom was racially and religiously discriminated against in a grocery store.
3. [Are We Racist? \(CBC News, 2016\)](#) - A video showing how people from different ethnicities experience racism while shopping, looking for an apartment or finding a job.

f. Building an Approach for Your Community

Every community is in a different part of the journey towards addressing discrimination and building inclusive communities.

The approach illustrated here was inspired by knowledge and wisdom from traditional knowledge, and concepts from diverse groups. It recognizes that the conditions we create can either perpetuate racism or act as grounds for challenging it. This approach focuses on recognizing and tackling the impact of racism through simple daily actions, self growth, community connections, and addressing systemic issues through collective actions. This specific approach was crafted for this project as an illustrative example that can be implemented or altered for your community.





CONTACT



CENTRE FOR
CIVIC RELIGIOUS
LITERACY

Alice Chan

alice@ccrl-clrc.ca



RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK

Elaine Flores

elainef@ruraldevelopment.ca



Ricardo Morales

rmorales@ccisab.ca



Kelly Hyde

k.hyde@keepersofthecircle.com

Soheila Homayed
soheilah@ruraldevelopment.ca

Jennifer Mah

jmah@ccisab.ca



Emily Pye

emily.pye@strathmore.ca

Lauren Friesen

lfriesen@ccisab.ca