

Recommendations for Municipalities

Report by New Brunswick Commissioner on Systemic Racism

October 2022

Introduction

The outcomes that are presented in this report are supported by consultations with various organizations and private interviews from April 2022 – July 2022. In total, forty-seven individual voices inform this work.

Three themes emerged from discussions:

1. Welcoming
2. Safety
3. Recognition

First Theme: A Welcoming Community

The first order of business is to define the exact meaning of a welcoming community. As one participant pointed out, “I can welcome you to my house and serve you coffee or I can welcome you into my house and serve you a five-course meal. In both cases, I’m being welcoming.” The notion of being a welcoming community is a common assertion by all levels of government and is even baked into our branding as friendly Maritimers. However, there doesn’t seem to be a collective understanding of what welcoming means. Many participants noted that Monctonians and New Brunswickers are *friendly* but not *friends*. One participant referred to Monctonians as “how-are-you friends”. They noted that people will ask you how you are but even if they are in a position to help (such as an employer), they do not. Another participant was more pointed by noting how community leaders are happy to post on social media their interactions with ethnocultural communities but “they stop helping after that Kodak moment” (male adult).

To be more precise, the City of Moncton (the City), needs to determine its own services it would like to put in place to be welcoming. This can range from simply acknowledging the value of newcomers or to having something more present such as open houses, or a more permanent anti-racist policy and structural changes. My recommendations are based on a more structure anti-racist strategies.

Second Theme: Safety

Participants of all ages spoke about safety. Concerns were not just based on physical safety but mental and spiritual as well. For participants who reside in low socio-economic regions of the

city, attention was on the need for structure safety such as better lighting, safer parks and cleanliness of the City.

Participants spoke about not feeling safe walking in their neighbourhoods and in the downtown region. They also noted that increased police presence made them feel less safe. Of the 47 participants, 32 recalled a negative interaction with police since 2020. On this note, I feel that the recent decision to place police officers in the high schools is highly problematic for students who already feel over-policed in their neighbourhoods.

Participants also spoke about lack of representation in leadership positions and how this invisibility contributed to their insecurity. Participants noted that they couldn't identify allies or know who they could turn to if they had concerns about racist treatment. Most were aware of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission (NBHRC); however, they were either looking for someone for informal advice or felt the NBHRC process was too arduous. This anxiety was often directly related to their legal status; established communities (such as the Jewish and Chinese communities) felt a greater ease reaching out to political leaders; whereas international students preferred community support.

There was also discussion around increasing the City's capacity to be an ally in issues that went beyond their mandate. For example, one participant said the City should push for permanent residents to have the right to vote. Another noted that the City should voice concerns over the lack of recognition of professionals coming to Moncton. Although this is beyond the decision-making power of the City, it was noted that it would be a positive sign to see a public stance on these issues.

Youth participants stated that they experience the threat of racism on a daily basis in a variety of locations ranging from schools to playgrounds to sports facilities to malls. To be clear, it was not the threat of physical violence but the aggressions that follow them. These aggressions include name calling, intimidations, being followed by security, greater penalties in sports and, as one participant noted, "Just being asked a lot of dumb questions all the time" (female, youth). There was a collective belief that these hostilities were due to factors ranging from lack of information about other cultures to hatred of those who are different.

Interestingly, two locations were mentioned repeatedly as safe spaces: the library and the City Market. Participants talked about the inclusive nature of these places. There were also several positive comments around Mosaïq and the emergence of different cultural group events and businesses.

Third Theme: Recognition

Recognition goes hand-in-hand with safety and welcoming. Participants noted the lack of public knowledge regarding the contributions of racial groups. For example, one immigrant entrepreneur asked if the City has any measurement of the financial contribution of racialized

businesses. Many participants felt this is especially important right now as immigration rises and the city becomes more diverse. They noted that while there is a lot of media coverage around refugees arriving in Moncton, very little is said about contributions made by racialized groups. Some participants commented that although the City has become very diverse, various forms of recognitions and awards are still mainly for White individuals.

Recommendations

The Report by the Commissioner on Systemic Racism, N.B. provided 23 recommendations that are within the City of Moncton's mandate for consideration / action. They are not in an order of importance or execution. These decisions should be left up to the city after taking stock of their own place in the anti-racism journey.

Recommendations provided revolve around the following areas:

- A. Municipal Policy and Planning
- B. Facility Safety
- C. Human resources and training
- D. Recognition
- E. Reconciliation
- F. Community

A. Municipal Policy and Planning

1. Develop an anti-racist policy for city staff that has clear descriptions, steps and consequences. Too often anti-discriminatory policies are bundled into respectful workplace and or anti-bullying policies. This is not appropriate. Furthermore, this policy should be highly visible in all city-related and city-funded facilities and spaces with its adoption presented in a public manner.
2. Consider all future development plans through a racialized lens and ensure that decisions on investments are based on data such as NB Health Council, poverty rates, and Census data. Invest in neighborhoods with high density of refugees and international students. Increase safety through design and accessibility (facilities, nice side walls, recreational centres etc.).
3. Execute an audit of the City of Moncton's policies and terminology to ensure that it is inclusive. Provide dedicated funding for local community-based anti-racism initiatives. Fund Community Grants and Community Arts Grants in a way that is reflective of the City's commitment to diverse expressions of artistic works.
 - [Work with local RCMP to foster an anti-racist city. Data and recent incidents have shown that the RCMP, as a force, does not have clarity around the issues of

anti-racism or systemic racism. My attempt to retrieve data from the RCMP Moncton was not successful. On behalf of citizens, it is incumbent on City leaders to demand evidence of a solid understanding of systemic racism and an action plan to promote a safe environment.]

4. Develop a whistle-blower process that makes it safe to report racial incidents. If this is happening on a city facility; the City needs to know.
5. Develop a 911 type approach to racist incidents. This is a step-by-step checklist of how to deal with a racist incident and should reflect various levels of proximity. For example, racist graffiti or a racist incident in the City would require different steps than a highly public yet distanced incident (such as the murder of George Floyd).

B. Facility Safety

Develop an action plan to increase participation and safety in sports and other activities:

1. Develop facilities that attract various communities (for example, Dieppe recently created a cricket pitch).
2. Make adherence to the City's anti-racism policy mandatory for all users of city facilities, interior and exterior. Although many organizations are currently working on their own anti-racism policy or are obliged to follow a parent organization, the City should direct users to adhere to a municipal policy as well.
3. Create familiarity in locations by having signage at city locations (parks, trails, buildings) in various languages.

C. Human Resources and Training

1. Create a paid position in the City for anti-racism work. Too often, this work falls on committees, HR, or others on the corner of their desk. The City should also dedicate specific funding for anti-racism public awareness campaigns.
2. Greater investment in immigration success. For example: Take an active voice in issues outside of a municipal mandate. For example, advocating for more funds and flexibility for federal settlement funding. **** In progress for 2023**
3. Grow City successes: The Municipal Career Expo, Settle and Stay and the Newcomers Job Fairs are innovative and points of pride for the City. However, the current personnel resources are not sustainable considering the growth of immigration in the City. There will need to be an increase in financial and human resources. **** In progress for 2023**
4. Create clear benchmarks for diversifying the City's staff. **** In progress for 2023**

5. Move beyond diversity training and mandate all employees to follow anti-racism training. Ensure that employees are trained to respond to, and to report racist incidents. Recent NB data indicates that most New Brunswickers are not able to define or identify examples of systemic racism. As a governing body, it is imperative that the City does have this understanding and is able to self audit for systemic racism.
6. Make anti-racist training part of the annual orientation for city councillors.

D. Recognition

1. Recognize racialized groups contributions in a public manner. Invest in celebrating the history of racialized communities/individuals to bring these communities and citizens to a local-level recognition.
2. Establish a database for names that reflects the diversity of the city.
3. Provide opportunities to create relationships and increase visibility of cultural centres (only if this is what the citizens of the centre want). Some suggestions are:
 - Hold presentations (for example awards; media announcements) at various cultural locations.
 - Provide flag poles to various cultural centres and hold flag raisings on locations.

E. Reconciliation

1. Enhance relationship with Indigenous communities, in particular off-reserve Indigenous people living in Moncton.
2. Identify which Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action are within a municipal mandate and create a strategic plan to address these calls.
3. Provide the Blanket Exercise to all city employees and council on a regular basis. This will help the City address the Call to Action #57:

“We call upon federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.”

F. Community

1. Work with local employers to encourage the employment of international students and other members of racialized groups. International students expressed the belief that racism, or at least lack of cultural competency, diminished their opportunity for work. They articulated a belief that the white students were far more successful finding work compared to their own experiences. ***In progress – however more can be done (newcomer employment fairs, bridging programs, International Student Retention Initiative – MAGMA and CAFI)
2. Develop a youth program for racialized youth. This can be done with non-profit youth organizations.
3. Develop an Anti-Racism Task Force. This needs to be different from committees of the past that were often too large with vague mandates. Participants who said they had been on previous diversity committees complained about a lack of accountability and influence. Furthermore, such committees often lack a direct line of communications to City Council. This task force should be no larger than 7 members with direct communication to City Council. Moreover, the focus should just be on one or two measurables a year. I also recommend that these meetings be open to the public with the public being able to request making presentations. The openness of this task force could create a safe place for citizens to go and listen and engage in making suggestions.

Final Thought

Overall, most participants want to stay in Moncton. They spoke about the social life, the arts and culture, the bilingualism, accessibility to ethnic supports and the bilingual nature of the city. However, older participants talked about leaving once their children left. Newcomers noted that without a sense of safety and security (this includes housing, work and representation), the decision to stay in Moncton may not be reasonable.

Submitted by Dr. Manju Varma, Commissioner on Systemic Racism, N.B.
October 2022