

# SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL FOR THE NORTH OKANAGAN

## ORGANIZING AGAINST RACISM AND HATE - YOUTH FORUM

University of B.C. Okanagan Campus May 26, 2010

### REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

#### INTRODUCTION:

A group of 87 youth, ages 14 to 17 attended the **Be the Change - Organizing against Racism and Hate Form** at the University of British Columbia Okanagan Campus in Kelowna on May 26, 2010. The forum ran from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm and was facilitated by a Vernon facilitator who is experienced in developing and delivering workshops dealing with diversity and multicultural issues. While all high school youth from the Okanagan and Thompson Region were invited, the communities that sent participants were Kamloops, Vernon and Lumby. The schools attending were as follows:

Northkam Secondary	Kamloops	11 students
Sa-Hali High School	Kamloops	5 students
Valley View High School	Kamloops	21 students
Twin Rivers High School	Kamloops	5 students
South Kamloops High School	Kamloops	6 students
Vernon Secondary High School	Vernon	8 students
Fulton High School	Vernon	5 students
Kalamalka High School	Vernon	12 students
Charles Bloom High School	Lumby	12 students
Seaton Secondary School	Vernon	2 students

Also in attendance for the form were 5 teachers from the various schools, the event coordinator from the North Okanagan Youth and Family Services, and Sergeant Robb Daly from the Vernon RCMP who was a guest speaker at the Forum.

Roughly 10% of the participants appeared to be students in Canada on International Programming.

#### The agenda for the day consisted of:

- Welcome to the Groups – Objectives of the Day
- Aboriginal Welcome Prayer – Elder (Lenora) from the West Bank First Nation
- Discussion / Viewing a variety of Youth Focused Video's on Racism and Multiculturalism
- Guest Speaker Sgt. Daly – Vernon RCMP – Hate Crimes in Canada – Social Networking and the Law
- Table Discussions and Answers to the following Questions
  1. What are the Issues Around Racism in your School/Community?
  2. What Changes are Needed to Take Place in Your School/Community to Address Issues of Racism?
  3. How do Youth Become Involved in Making Changes to Racism/Hate in Your School/Community?
- Mural – All participants took part in completing a mural giving their Impressions of the day.
- Evaluations Completed

The teaching staff did not participate in the table discussion with the youth, but did discuss and completed questions that were geared towards their impressions of racism and hate in the schools and how youth can participate in changes. Their replies are reflected separately within this report.

## **COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FORUM**

**The first question dealt with what the youth saw as issues within their school and community. Below are the replies submitted; the brackets ( ) indicated the number of times the same reply was given.**

- Kids in my school are constantly making derogatory terms and racist jokes towards each other and even exchanged between strangers that say it simply because they are part of the that religion or race.
- Racist Jokes (37) - particularly Asian and First Nations.
- Some kids think that First Nations kids are “Dirty” because their skin is darker.
- Asians in our school are called “Asian Nerds”.
- There is discrimination in our school for kids who have blond or red hair. (3)
- People with dark skin are called “Dirty Mexicans” even if they are not Mexican
- People from the Middle East are labeled as terrorists.
- Our school is really friendly, so if racism is brought up, it is only used as a joke. (2)
- There are racist jokes around the school, but we are friends so not a big deal, but I think they should stop it.
- A lot of kids are really rude and they bully First Nations kids (6)
- International kids do not get talked to or accepted into groups at school. (9)
- As an international student it is hard to talk to Canadian kids – they just don’t care about Asian students.
- We laugh at kids that are not too smart.
- Racism is minimal at our school. There are not many different cultures – we are all white – a few aboriginal or international students. (6)
- There is discrimination at first with certain people, but not for long.
- Stereotyping is more prominent than racism.(3)
- Racist jokes but only between friends.
- There is mutual racism between the white and First Nations kids.
- Kids at our school think it is fine and ok to be racist. (2)
- Kids make fun of Asians because they do not know the English language very well
- Some people are always alone – international students.

- Kids say “That’s so Gay” or “Your So Gay” or “Fags”(4)
- Racism around sexual orientation is bigger than racism around race. (2)
- First Nations kids are racist against white kids.
- I am gay and people are rude towards me and my girlfriend. (2)
- The problem at our school is we exclude the international students – especially the Asian students.
- Lack of understanding of sexual orientation issues.
- Kids do not include international students. (4)
- It is definitely “NOT COOL” to help exchange kids.
- Stereotyping, judging other students by their looks – particularly Asians and First Nations (5)
- Native Rooms at the School create discrimination
- Not enough diversity at our school.
- No inclusion among First Nations People. (3)
- Kids are judgmental about what you wear and what you look like. (2)
- Lots of kids just HATE different cultures in the School.
- Lack of multiculturalism creates ignorance.
- Younger kids are racist because it is COOL.
- Kids are learning to be racist in their home from their parents.
- Sometimes students do not know they are being racist, but they are – especially to the international students.
- Most exchange students are just not accepted in the Schools.
- The problem about racism is a total lack of understanding of different cultures.
- Peer pressures can create racism. (2)
- Racism is due to it being commercialized and stereotyped.
- In our school, we have “Kick a Ginger Day” (red heads) (8)
- There is a major lack of understanding and a lack of knowledge that produces racism.
- First Nations students have special perks such as their own support room and their own grad – this causes racial problems with the non native kids. (2)

- The oppression with the Natives is over, so they should not be getting free education or special money – this causes a lot of racism because it is not fair – our school and all the community feels this way.
- We are afraid of the Natives in our town because they belong to a gang called the “Greeks”.
- Canadian students hate Asian students, so Asian students then hate Canadians.
- Huge problem at our school with all the kids name calling First Nations kids.

**The second and third questions dealt with what changes need to happen in the schools/community to address and make changes and how the youth can become involved in the process. Below are the replies received on both questions as the participants gave very similar responses to both questions; again the () indicated the number of times the same reply was given.**

- Students need to speak out – tell people that racism is wrong – stand up and try to stop it. (12)
- Start informing younger kids about racism - start informing them when they are young. (7)
- Increase the amount of exchange students so we can experience other cultures more. (5)
- Need events at school such as:
  - Anti racism discussion groups.
  - Assemblies /education about the issues. (13)
  - Have school events that welcome everyone in the school. (2)
  - Post posters in the school. (2)
  - Anti-racism clubs in school/ help to make friends with international students. (4)
  - School to encourage students to participate.
  - One day set aside to make a big deal about racism.
  - Anti-Racism Day/Multicultural Days.
  - Culture Appreciation Day.
  - Colored t-shirts.
  - Kids need to become part of the solution.
  - Have a school program that welcomes exchange students.
- Try to get the point across in public places – awareness. (5)
- Try to become friends with an exchange student – that will help the racism. (2)
- Teachers and Principals need to be brought to attention right away if racism is exposed so it can be stopped right away. (3)

- Make sure all of the students know what racism is, and what it isn't.
- Change the patterns – people need to want to change!
- Take away the First Nations room/international students room, because it is seen as discriminatory or seen as special privileges. (7)
- Schools and teachers really need to enforce the importance of school spirit and inclusive involvement; this shows a caring in the school and combats racism.
- There should be a greater emphasis on peer role models and interaction between the grades.
- Stop letting friends, family and classmates get away with racism – point it out and make a change.
- All High Schools should have a gay/straight alliance so that sexual orientation is normalized and it will stop the hatred.
- There should be discussions in the classrooms about racism. It should be part of the curriculum.
- Use the RCMP D.A.R.E. program as a model to make it an anti-racist program.
- Start a dress code at the school that prohibits racist clothing such as swastika earrings and racist tattoos.
- Play anti-racist music at school dances.
- Have more workshops like this one in all communities – it provides knowledge and education and that is spread when the kids get back to school.
- Our school can create an anti-racist video – under the Racism – Stop It contest.
- Although there needs to be changes at our school, people just don't try because no one cares enough, including teachers.
- Educate Canadian students about Asians, to try and stop the hatred.
- Actively go out and say 'NO' to racist jokes and racist comments. (15)
- Inform the media about how much racism and hate is going around.
- Posters and propaganda have little effect on students – words and actions need to happen – we learn by example.
- We need more conferences/workshops like this one so we can become educated about racism and try to stop it (5)
- Encourage your parents and adults to change about their views on racism.
- Racist joke need to be stopped – educate people on how hurtful they are. (9)
- More activities in the schools that include everyone – Asians, and First Nations and whites (6)
- More events like this one that educate people and make them more aware (2)
- The law should have stronger consequences for hate crimes in this country. (2)

- We should first acknowledge we are racist and then try to fix it.
- Educate more openly – do not force the learning.
- Bring back Pen Pals – it helped to understand other cultures.
- Remove the First Nations Grad as it causes discrimination and they remain secluded.
- Self promotion of racist jokes need to end i.e. Blacks telling jokes about blacks.

### **The comments from the teaching staff were as follows:**

1. The students perceive that they are not racist, yet they have never been exposed to, or have had to live in a multicultural community or live as a visible minority
2. Students need exposure to multiple cultures, and need to understand where their fear of different cultures comes from. Students should begin to think less about “tolerance” and more about “acceptance”
3. This has been a great initiative. We hope it continues into the future. A great idea to have students from different schools and to have them mixed up at the tables. There were some great discussions.
4. I think this forum will give my students a good starting point for further discussion.

### **Teacher's Recommendations**

- ❖There should be smaller classes and move funding for multicultural programs.
- ❖There should be less curriculum such as SSII so that multiculturalism and be adequately covered
- ❖ There should be a professional day that brings multiple cultures into a classroom.
- ❖Students in programs like Leadership and Students Voice can promote acceptance and multiculturalism.

### **Random Comments from the Participant's Mural**

We Can All Make a Difference  
 Everyone is Unique – Accept It!  
 Respect..Equality..Love..Acceptance.. Harmony..Hope.. Accept..Peace..Empowered  
 The Panda Bear is the Least Racist Animal because they are Black and White AND Asian!  
 There's Battle Lines Being Drawn... Nobody's Right if Everybody's Wrong  
 Now We Have the Knowledge – Let's Go and Make a Change  
 Have a Voice – Have the Power!  
 Stop – Look – Think - Feel  
 You May Say I'm A Dreamer, But I'm not the Only One. I Hope Some Day You'll Join Us and The World Will Live as One.  
 Love All the Colors of the Rainbow  
 Be The Change that You Want to See in The World  
 Walk a Mile in My Shoes  
 It's What's on the Inside that Counts

