

They are watching us

BY VINCE SIMON

IF YOU LISTEN to country music you may have heard the song *Watching You* by singer Rodney Atkins.

In the lyrics, Atkins asks his four-year-old son why he uses the four letter word.

His son answers, "I've been watching you dad ain't that cool, I'm your buckaroo, I wanna be like you . . ."

Author Stefani Allen writes that "racism is certainly not something that a child is born with," that "children naturally idolize their parents. They watch them and try to emulate their every action and judgment. This does not mean that the parents are actively trying to teach their children any particular thing."

So ladies and gentlemen, they are watching us.

The vast majority of us are responsible parents. We only want the best for our children, nothing more, nothing less.

However, we are not perfect and sometimes we may be teaching them the wrong things unintentionally.

Responsible parenting is teaching your children all the positive things in life. Being a parent is a challenge. Being a positive parent is an even bigger challenge!

My wife and I have five children and we have always taught them to have respect for themselves and for others.

Even into adulthood and their chosen careers (two of them in law enforcement) we always remind them that they are "humans" first and to always be considerate of others.

My mom was the most considerate person that I knew. She taught me and my nine siblings to be respectful of others and of all things.

She showed us by example. She always knew that we were watching



ONE CITY
MANY VOICES

Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee produces this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

her.

One of the things that she used to say was, "Treat others as you would want to be treated."

I moved to Thunder Bay in 1998 with my wife and two children. We have called Thunder Bay our home since then. Three other children live in New Brunswick.

My wife and I both come from big families, she from a family of 12 children and I from 10, both from a Migmag First Nation.

This was the first time that we lived outside of a First Nation community. And this is where I first encountered racism in retail establishments.

I did not ignore these incidents, whether they were subtle or blatant.

I would either ask why the person was behaving that way, remind them that they were not being nice or ask who their supervisor was.

On two occasions, I wrote a letter to the business owner or manager.

In A Community of Acceptance report, it states that "Most interview participants said they make their own decisions and won't shop at stores that give them poor treatment."

In a 1994 report by a multicultural

committee on race relations in schools, "Aboriginal people were clearly indicated as the most targeted population.

Native students believed their responses to racial incidents often got them into trouble and felt that schools and teachers were generally insensitive and indifferent to racism.

They depict discomfort in reporting incidents 'because no one will understand them, believe them, or do anything.'

I believe this is a general scenario that applies to many incidents of racism against visible minorities.

Victims tend to keep quiet and simply refuse to go back to that particular establishment.

Many perpetrators take advantage of this and continue with their rude treatment of minorities.

All too often, the owners or managers of these businesses are not aware of the negative attitudes and the disrespect displayed by their staff.

Business people set up businesses to make a profit. They depend on the colour "green" to keep their businesses going. Customers bring in the green, regardless of their ethnicity or race.

If the business owners do not know that their staff are mistreating customers, they cannot do anything about it. So it is very important to bring these incidents to someone's attention.

Thunder Bay Anti-Racism Advisory Committee is working on reducing these types of incidents and promoting a diverse culture.

Vince Simon is a community representative on the Thunder Bay Anti-Racism Advisory Committee. He is a employed as an executive director of Ka-Na-Chi-Hih Specialized Solvent Abuse Treatment Centre.

28/10/13