

Report racism to fight hatred

BY BRENDA JOY REIMER



ONE CITY,
MANY VOICES

The Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism and Respect Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

cares" by having a place to report incidents where the individual's experience would be validated.

As the project heads into a refreshed media campaign in September, we have been reflecting on what we have learned. First and foremost, we have learned that for many people reporting racist incidents is of little interest unless they can see some followup action.

Over four years, there was an increase in the number of reported incidents involving racialized groups. It is not only Indigenous people who are experiencing racist incidents.

Incidents reported were spread out over the whole city with downtown cores forming cluster areas. There was no significant difference in incidents reported between north and south sides of the city.

Because the reporting is voluntary, the date collected cannot be used to make definitive comments about racism in Thunder Bay. It can, however, be used to indicate trends based on reported incidents. The intention is to report

such information to city council and to the community in a more timely manner so that it can be used by groups developing their own community action plans to challenge and address racism.

Most responses tended to be from those experiencing racist incidents in Thunder Bay. Fewer responses were from those witnessing racist incidents. Are we as a community turning a blind eye? The reporting form is confidential. No names are required unless a followup call is requested. It is as simple as saying this is what I observed when and where.

The Incident Reporting and Referral Project is one way in which the wider community can say loudly and clearly #NotInMyTbay. We all need to take the time to report anything that we have witnessed. The Working Group and the City of Thunder Bay Anti-Racism and Respect Advisory Committee have a vision of increased usage and better communication with the wider community as this project emerges from pandemic restrictions. It is one of many ways in which the community can challenge racist and discriminatory behaviours.

To report or seek referral services, please connect online through www.lspc.ca/incidentreporting or call 2-1-1.

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YOU have seen the hashtag and the colourful signs around the community. Thunder Bay is beginning to find its voice and to speak up against racism. Words are not enough. They must be followed by action.

Accepting that racism exists and doing whatever we can to uproot it is unquestionably a challenge. It requires action on many fronts and it's a slow process. The Thunder Bay Public Library and Wake the Giant are examples of how change is beginning in our community in two very different ways. The rally for Black Lives Matter and the Canada Day March showed the strong support and leadership from younger people.

As chair of the working group for the Incident Reporting Service, I would like to share one response to the challenge of uprooting racist behaviour in Thunder Bay. Much has changed since the project was first initiated four years ago.

The City of Thunder Bay Anti-Racism and Respect Advisory Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay designed the project which is delivered by the Lakehead Social Planning Council's 211 North. The intent was to offer those who experienced or witnessed racism an opportunity to report it by calling 211 or responding online or in-person. Those reporting are offered links to referral services if they wish.

Although individual instances could not be addressed, the information collected could be used to identify problem areas. It was hoped that the project would address the feeling that "nobody