

# Community partners continue efforts to fight hate, racism

BY LEE-ANN CHEVRETTE

THE 2020 hate crime statistics released by Statistics Canada on March 17 clearly shows that much work remains to be done.

The data shows that Thunder Bay ranked fifth in police-reported hate crimes per capita in Canada in 2020, with a rate of 11.1 incidents per 100,000 population. In 2015 and 2017, Thunder Bay ranked first, with rates of 22.3 and 17.4, respectively.

Since 2013, local police hate crime data identifies the greatest motivating factor for hate crimes is race, followed by religion and sexual orientation. It is important to also recognize that these numbers likely represent just a fraction of the total incidents that actually take place, as many people are still not reporting.

In June 2021, Thunder Bay City Council approved the provincially mandated Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan. The community identified racism and discrimination as significant threats to safety and well-being in Thunder Bay. Those issues are built into the plan, with a focus on tackling interpersonal, institutional and systemic racism. Diversity Thunder Bay is the action table for this priority area, meaning it will champion this work and work alongside other community partners who are likewise committed to fighting racism and hate.

Several local programs have sought to raise awareness and spark action to join the fight against racism and hate. One example is the implementation of Recommendation 112 from the



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**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.**

Seven Youth Inquest, which involved numerous local Indigenous organizations, Indigenous youth, and other community partners. These groups collaborated to develop a public education campaign to raise awareness about racially motivated crimes, specifically those involving Indigenous people residing in and around Thunder Bay.

The campaign was first launched last fall and relaunched on March 21 to coincide with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The campaign provides information about racism and hate, including psychological and social impacts, and encourages numerous actions residents can take to join the fight in Thunder Bay.

Other local efforts have focused on encouraging reporting of racism and hate, deepening our collective understanding about Indigenous history and the legacy of residential schools, building solidarity, and mobilizing action against both interpersonal and

systemic racism.

Another visible effort includes the Youth in Solidarity Against Racism and Hate Collective, which recently completed a public art mural on Cooke Street. In the coming months, additional local efforts will be made more visible, including a campaign from the Youth Collective, a public education campaign for Recommendation 116 from the Seven Youth Inquest, and more materials related to Recommendation 112, among others.

Despite these efforts, ongoing hate-motivated incidents perpetrated against individuals and groups in our community persist, as well as systemic and structural issues.

Overall, the hate crime data shows the number of hate crimes reported to police across the country rose 37 per cent in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, compared with the previous year. Statistics Canada says police-reported hate crimes targeting race or ethnicity rose 80 per cent in 2020, compared with 2019, and accounted for the bulk of the national increase.

We all have a role to play in combatting racism in our city. The City plays an important role, and continues to work closely with community partners. Together, we can and must do better.

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