



Final Report

RMCS Anti-Racism Forums – October 2021- February 2022

Project Overview

This project, which ran from October 2021 until February 2022, focused on the sharing of common experiences among the Asian community (all parts of Asia) and other BIPOC communities of racism and discrimination in the Richmond context. Stories were catalogued and shared to expose the reality of racism in Richmond. The focus of the project was connecting people and building community capacity to understand how racism, discrimination and intolerance impact people and damage individual lives and community.

As part of mapping racism in Richmond, the project identified key community mobilisers in the community and key actions points/ ideas to tackle racism to be shared with community leaders, politicians and the business community. The aim of this sharing with partners will be to get them commit to, and implement, identified anti-racism actions in service and policy development.

Harmony in Diversity

Project Methodology

A planning group was formed that consisted of members of the Richmond CCT committee, Resilience BC and BIPOC individuals and also a City Councilor. This group helped to frame and focus the project and ensure input was received from diverse community groups with various perspectives. This group also help identify focus group questions and approaches and techniques in inclusive participatory practice.

Nine focus groups were held with an average of 25 individuals per sessions. A total of 191 individuals were involved in five focus groups. Although specific demographic information was not collected and names not collected, partly to ensure confidentiality, age ranges of participants were spread between 16 and 80+ years of age. Over 75 percent of participants were of Chinese descent with the majority of the 75 percent being Mandarin speakers originally from mainland China. About 15 percent of participants had cultural heritage from India, Pakistan whilst the remaining ten percent from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Korea, Japan and South East Asia. Out of the 191 project participants, over 150 had been in Canada ten years or less.

SD38 Grade 11 and 12 student at a Richmond Secondary School
India Cultural Centre- volunteers and board members
RMCS – English language classes
SUCCESS English language classes x 5 (various language proficiencies)
General Public Session (open to all)

Attendees were asked to engage with others in the sessions in small groups about their experiences, how they were supported and how they could have been better supported, what tools would have helped them and what resources should be available in the community to support victims of racism.

Questions asked were deliberately open ended.

What does racism look like to you?

How have you experienced racism in your life in Richmond?

How do you think racism has changed over your years in Richmond?

What messages/ideas/feelings about racism do you want to communicate with politicians and leaders in the community?

In Richmond –what experiences do we have in common with each other – how can build on these commonalities to create community?

Key Findings

Overview

Harmony in Diversity

The general consensus from participants is that, although Richmond is a successful and inclusive community, racism is getting much worse and that a lot of people in positions of authority do not realize that, or if they do, choose not to take it seriously. There is still a lot of misunderstanding and lack of awareness of racism in Richmond and responses to racism by Richmond organizations and institutions are uncoordinated and not effective. The forums identified two current main strands of racism in Richmond that were reported by participants. These strands are a) COVID fueled anti-Asian racism b) long standing and virulent islamophobia.

“COVID -19 and the anti vax movement has given some people a green light to be racist and some racist groups are latching onto that movement”

RCMP

When reporting Participants reported that the RCMP, despite best intentions, often promised support but were able to give very little, stating it was a hate incident and not a hate crime. This often left participants confused and angry. Participants thus felt that if the RCMP cannot press hate crime charges they are no longer interested and there is no support and follow up.

Many participants reported that Islamophobia is not taken seriously by the RCMP. After the murder of Muslims in London Ontario earlier this year many Muslims living in Richmond became very afraid. They were worried the same would happen in Richmond and saw little indication the RCMP were prepared in a way that would prevent that happening.

“I, as a black man and a Muslim, I have been stopped repeatedly by the RCMP in Richmond. I feel I am stopped for no reason and far more than my non-black friends”

A central problem that participants highlighted is that they don't know when to call the RCMP and what to expect from the RCMP. There is also uncertainty as to when RCMP will or will not press hate crime charges, what the RCMP consider a hate crime and what they do not.

City Services

Participants reported that, although City Hall and its services are generally inclusive, systems and services provided have historically been designed in a way where racism and its impact on the community have not been taken fully into account. Participants indicated that many City facilities do try to be inclusive but do not fully utilize the language and cultural skills of their staff and volunteers and thus can face challenges in meeting the needs of all communities. Due to the rapid nature of demographic change in Richmond the demographic profile of City staff and politicians does not reflect that of the wider community of Richmond.

Public Safety/Transportation

“I don't like going on the Sky train just in case somebody says something racist to me. It has not happened, but it worries me as you hear so many stories”

The COVID situation has given racist people an opportunity to be much more open. Some project participants of Chinese origin reported being picked on in the street by racists who insisted they should be wearing masks in public (outside) and were very aggressive. People of Chinese origin, have been told they are responsible for COVID. Participants reported they have been verbally abused as they drive and reported specific incidents of people whispering and moving away in line ups. Fears of racism and assault on public buses and trains are very real to the point where some participants stated that they always prefer to drive.

“I worry about getting verbally or physically assaulted on public transit. I have often had people call me a terrorist or make comments about my appearance and don't like to stand near the platform edge incase somebody tries to push me in front of a train”

The Public Education System

SD38 is seen as inclusive and supportive by most students and the SWIS program is a great success. However it was reported however that some newer immigrants students can still sometimes feel disconnect, feeling lost and disorientated in their new environment. SD38 has come a long way but participants reported that historically, for many years, SD38 was ignoring

the problems of newcomers to Richmond and were unwilling to change and there is hangover from that period in the attitudes of some teaching and admin staff (a minority).

“After the murder of Muslims in London Ontario earlier this year many Muslims living in Richmond became very afraid. We were worried the same would happen here. Our school reacted like it had never happened, it the murders were only mentioned by one teacher. We needed reassurance and we did not get it”

Muslim students spoken to reported often feeling invisible within the public school system. When islamophobia happens in incident’s locally or nationally school authorities do not react

“I reported to a teacher that a student used the N word and was told by this teacher not to complain so much and “not to be that type of black person” ”.

Getting Help and Support.

“I have been the victim of a racist incident where I have been watched by bystanders that have done nothing. Asking if somebody is ok after the incident is over s not good enough”

Participants reported that after being the victim of a racist incident they needed somebody to talk to help with feelings- but this proved difficult. They could find nowhere in Richmond that could provide specialist help and eventually had to go to Vancouver for this assistance.

Participants who have experienced racist assaults also indicated that it is painful and shocking when nobody helps, for whatever reason do not intervene.

“ we have learnt to stand up for ourselves as we have been in Canada a long while - but many newcomers will find it more difficult to know how to stand up to racism and get help”

Participants, particularly newer Canadians, indicated they don’t know where to get help if they see or directly become the victims of racism.

Harmony in Diversity

“I don’t know what I would do if someone was racist towards me- how should I react and keep myself safe. Would I call the police and if so when”?

Key Recommendations

- RCMP to have responses to racism in their strategic planning, have a more organized and thought approach to dealing with racist incidents.
- RCMP to be better trained, more culturally aware.
- Build more public education and awareness, and increase learning and understanding of Indigenous culture and history.
- Widespread bystander training being offered in the community.
- Cultural awareness training for SD38 teachers and administrators.
- A counselling and support service in Richmond, where individuals who are victims of racism can get help.

- City government creating more awareness, exposing the reality of racism in Richmond and training their staff in responding to racism incidents, how to provide support for victims of racism.
- City of Richmond adopting an anti-racism strategy for the City.
- City of Richmond adopting the Richmond Community (anti-racism) Protocol
- City of Richmond endorsing the collection of data on number and type of hate related incidents that happen annually in Richmond.
- The training and support of specific advocates in each community that can be anti-racist champions
- Interfaith events aimed at people meeting and sharing information on faith activities.
- A forum with the RCMP to make them more aware of racism related issues in Asian communities.
- More regular public dialogues, with food and conversations, to build trust and understanding.



RMCS
RICHMOND MULTICULTURAL
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Harmony in Diversity