



Canadian
Race Relations
Foundation

Fondation
canadienne des
relations raciales

Event Report

1. **Name of the Event:** in Lethbridge, AB (English)
2. **Event Date:** November 4, 2019

3. **Brief Description of the Event:**

I (Erin Reid, Alberta Regional Director and Co-founder of the Centre for Civic Religious Literacy) hosted the focus group in the Lethbridge Public Library Community Meeting Room because this is a very central and neutral public space. The event took place on a Monday evening, from 6:30 – 8pm. The facilitators came before the event started to help set up and go through instructions for facilitation. There were snacks, fruit platters, veggie platter, cookies, coffee, and juice on the back table from which participants were encouraged to help themselves throughout the discussion. I spent the first 15 minutes showing a slide presentation where I a) introduced our organizations; b) introduced the background to the subject by showing statistics about growing diversity and hate crimes in Alberta; c) talked about some recent incidents that have happened in Alberta in the last couple of years. We then started the small group discussions divided into three sections:

- 1) **Section A** -- Thinking about race
- 2) **Section B** -- Thinking about religion/spirituality, race, and discrimination
- 3) **Section C** -- Responding to discrimination

Each participant was given the same set of questions, and after the participants introduced themselves to each other, the facilitators led the discussion. The facilitators were encouraged to be flexible with the questions and to ensure that all voices in the group were heard. I observed the groups and responded to any questions the facilitators or participants had, and kept my eye on the progress of each group. I also projected the questions from each section on the slide deck at the front of the room to help facilitators keep on track. When I saw that most groups had finished all the questions from the three sections, I opened up the conversation and asked for participants to share any thoughts or comments from each of the sections. After an animated discussion, we concluded the evening and gift cards were given to participants.

4. **Speakers & Moderators:** Erin Reid, The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy (CCRL) co-founder and Alberta Regional Director
Keynote Speaker: n/a

5. Audience:

- a. **Number of the attendees:** 22 participants (including 2 CRRF youth ambassadors and 4 facilitators)
- b. **Who were the main audience?** 18-35 year old youth from Lethbridge, and 2 CRRF youth ambassadors from Vancouver

6. Strategic Impact

CRRF Strategic Objectives 2017-2020

The CRRF will ...

- 1) Identify key issues of racism and racial discrimination
- 2) Be recognized as the leading national comprehensive resource on racism, race relations, best practices and recommended solutions
- 3) Engage Canadian Youth and other groups in addressing racism and race relations using a variety of means
- 4) Develop and promote education on the content of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Multiculturalism Act, their inherent values as a source for building a common understanding of our individual responsibilities, and as a tool for exploring the nature of rights and their limits in Canada with respect to speech, religious beliefs and discrimination

a. Which of the above strategic objectives were met?

1, 2, 3, 4. The organizations and work of CRRF and CCRL were described for participants and the logo for both organizations was included in the slide deck.

b. Please assess the strategic impact. Describe why (or why not) the event was a success? How did you measure the success? What metrics were used to measure success? (Please do not exceed half a page.)

I would consider the event a success for the following reasons: First, we were able to get a group that was quite diverse, with participants coming from different religious backgrounds, different racialized communities, and different life experiences (e.g. there were newly arrived refugees, immigrants who have lived in Lethbridge 10+ years, and international students attending university).

In addition, there were also a number of incidents that participants discussed that clearly demonstrate how the intersection of race and religion is impacting these participants.

- For example, one Muslim woman told us about an incident where a young white man started honking his horn at her, screamed at her to go home, and

then tried to run her car off the road. She had her children in the car with her. She talked about shaking with fear for days afterward.

- Another participant talked about how a Sikh student was harassed by classmates and called 'towel-head' at the college here.
- Still, another participant told us about how one of her high school classmates ridiculed her for wearing a hijab and not celebrating Christmas. In this case, the participant invited this student to come to her mosque. The student accepted the invitation and has since apologized for her ignorance.
- Many participants spoke of the need for allies to help share the burden of educating people about racism and religious discrimination.
- Social media was brought up as an important tool for both education about these issues, but also for creating community with others who are facing the same challenges.
- Many participants spoke about the important role that education and educators play in the fight against racism and religious discrimination. Two participants mentioned how important their high school and college teachers were in helping them cope with difficulties and also creating an inclusive environment.
- Most importantly, after the session, 7-10 youth approached me to express how much they appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences with others. Many said they wish that there were more opportunities like this evening to talk about these difficult issues. Transcripts from each of the four small groups are included in the report Appendix.

c. How can this event be improved in the future?

Overall, I think the event went really well and everyone seemed to find it meaningful. Something I would try to improve next time would be to maybe have the groups a bit more mixed as they mostly sat at the same table with whoever they came with. I also think that I could have spent a bit more time doing a warm up exercise to get the participants in the right frame of mind. For three of the groups, this wasn't a problem, but for the large group who came from the newly arrived immigrant youth group (mostly 18-20 year olds), they struggled a bit to stay focused on the questions. The last issue that I wish could have been different is that our event was scheduled on the same night as a screening of a movie by an Indigenous film-maker that was also hosted at the library. Because of this, we were unable to get participation from the Indigenous community as the groups I reached out to were already planning to go to the film. As this event was planned after mine had already been booked, there was little I could do as there were no more available evenings for booking; however, it is something to keep in mind for future event planning.