



Event Report

On August 28 2019, the CRRF in partnership with The Mosaic Institute invited 15-20 participants for this third session. Approximately sixteen young working professionals, of different ethnic backgrounds, including two CRRF Youth Ambassadors and a Prime Minister Youth Council member attended this session. These individuals, active or working in the areas of equity, diversity, inclusion, education, law, and research gathered to speak on the directions and trends of race relations, inclusion, cross-cultural relationship building, and the obstacles they see in building a more inclusive and equitable Canada.

Below are some of the highlights and quotes from this session:

- Sources of prejudice and discrimination are often rooted in historical and social contexts, which are then shaped, by institutional structures and practices.
- The millennials feel that their generation is politically and socially active than the older generation and therefore more sensitive about the direction of race relations in Canada.
- It is important for the younger generation to be educated by an informed and sound curriculum so that they can make decisions that are more informed.
- Leadership can shape social norms, but it takes courage and determination to live up to our virtues.
- There was consensus on the fact that racism in Canada is not overt. They felt that in Canada a lot of people do not think about the Racist undertones of Canadian history or the racist immigration policies – such as the paint chip card that existed to measure the whiteness of certain immigrants – instead people tend to view Canada as a multicultural place where we are “all equal”.
- Another theme that participants spoke to was the idea of tokenism. One participant shared that they were excited to see lots of POCs and strong WOCs in positions of power but hoped that it was not just tokenism. The group felt that across the board there are glass ceilings and cemented hierarchies that prevent POCs from creating real, systemic change even when they are in positions of power. Though they may operate in those spaces, their hands are often tied. The healthcare system was shared as an example of how it is very difficult to decolonize an entrenched system specifically as it relates to relations with First Nations peoples.



- Participants had an interesting discussion on the idea of awareness. They discussed that people are often aware of racism – for instance, parents who immigrated to Canada are very aware to how racist Canada has been to them – but at the same time that awareness does not translate to implicating themselves as part of the problem. They felt people were aware of the obstacles that exist but they do not think about why that is. For instance, Canadians can see that Indigenous peoples are more represented in prisons and homelessness but people are not questioning why. They do not take the time to understand the history and dig deeper.
- Some participants suggested personalizing it to their experience and understanding. For example, explaining why Canada Day is problematic by relating it to their Independence Day. In Canada, the colonizers never left whereas in other places, India, Pakistan etc. Independence Day celebrates the colonizers leaving.
- There was group consensus on the fact that when discussing race relations, it was helpful to approaching people with compassion. However, it was also stressed that this work was emotional labour that should be compensated and that sometimes it was not worth it to argue. Sometimes it is important to pick your battles.
- There was group consensus that discussing these topics was better than not talking about them at all. Most participants felt that dialogue was better than debate. It was noted that in debate sometimes our perspectives and opinions can become more hardened and so a dialogue that takes a more nuanced approach to these issues was more productive.
- Conversations are not binary and we do not need to operate in a yes/no either/or space.
- There was also a conversation around being a role model and taking on a debate with someone who has problematic or hateful views for the sake of those who might be watching. For instance, in a classroom as the teacher it is your duty to challenge a student who might have a hateful perspective so that the bystanders or other students understand that this perspective should be challenged.
- Participants felt that there was a lot of civic action amongst Millennials. There was consensus on the idea that this generation is more vocal and woke. We are comfortable making rumbles. However, this would be different across different geographies in Canada. There is a definite rural and urban divide when it comes to these discussions.
- There was an interesting conversation around how to uplift Gen Z and



support them. Many felt this is where the real change will come from but that there is a sense of apathy and dread in this generation. It was suggested that Millennials need to find a way to guide and support Gen Z. There was also a discussion around being a bridge for younger generations and older generations to come together.

- “It is a cliché sometimes to say that youth are our future, but it really comes down to the future you create.”

In summary, the millennial generation represented in our focus groups are aware of the challenges we face in fighting racism. They feel that they can try to improve race relations by better equipping themselves with the application of knowledge through insightful conversations.