Appendix 3: City Voices Panel Discussion Summary

Event Date and Time: Friday, March 26th 2021 10:00am-12:00pm

Organizers: Omar Abdullahi, Aron Skworchinski

Moderator: Louise Simbandumwe Knowledge Keeper: Clayton Sandy

Panelists: Darrell Sais, Man Doan, Sylvia Boudreau, Chrispin Ntungo

Participants: 249 Attended (Including City staff and External Facilitators)

Event Description

A facilitated workshop open to City staff from all racial backgrounds to participate. This event featured City staff Panelists from First Nations, Inuit, Metis Nation, Black, Racialized and Religious Minorities communities to share firsthand experiences of racism and what they envision a city without racism to look like. A community leader who is a human rights advocate moderated the event with support from facilitators who helped to guide breakout sessions. This was intended to create a safe, supportive environment where the panelists could share their stories and City staff could engage in meaningful discussion.

Panelist 1 Summary- Darrell Sais

Darrell has been employed at Winnipeg Transit since September 1990. His current position at Winnipeg Transit is an Instructor with the Training Branch. Prior to his promotion as an Instructor, he was employed as a Bus Operator with Winnipeg Transit for 18 years. He also currently covers the Operations Supervisors offices when they are away on vacation or if they are away for an extended period of time. His Dad and both of his Grandfathers are former City of Winnipeg employees. His Dad was employed for 27 years with Public Works before retiring in 2002. He Has been retired for almost 18 years.

Key Takeaways:

- Times have changed over the last 30 years and the City has zero tolerance to racism in the workplace. There are many outlets for employees to access to address racism in their workplace. Employees need to come forward as the city cannot address the racism if employees are not willing to come forward.
- Colleagues and leaders need to listen when someone comes forward with a complaint.
- The Leadership within the city needs to know racism exists within and outside the organization. Leadership needs to understand it takes a lot of courage to come forward with a complaint.
- Programs similar to Circles to Reconciliation and Indigenous Cultural training need to continue in educating city employees.
- The City needs to reach out to its First Nation, Inuit, Metis, Black, Racialized and Religious Minorities employees and inform them that there are supports available to them if they are experiencing racism in the workplace.

Panelist 2 Summary - Man Doan

Man Doan has joined the City of Winnipeg in November 2019. He is the Manager of Information Systems in the Community Services Department. Prior to that, Man spent 16 years in a progressive career with the Government of Manitoba, with the last 8 years serving in a leadership capacity from IT Manager to IT Director and Chair of the IT Council. Man has over 20 years of knowledge and experience in Information and Communications Technology, in both the private and public sectors.

Key Takeaways:

- With the recent Anti-Asian racism associated to COVID-19 Pandemic, Asian people are being verbally abused, harassed, avoided like a virus, scapegoated, spat on, attacked and killed. People are scared. It is chilling for the community. Racism is real. The fear is real. Hate has no place anywhere, in Canada, in Winnipeg, it has to stop.
- If you see injustice, take actions. If you see hate, speak out. If you see people being abused, attacked, please stand up, help and support them. Do not be silent. Because our silence is complicity.
- Racism is a product of prejudice and power. Most of the time, racist people are just being ignorant. The racists think of newcomers and immigrants as a burden. They come to steal jobs from them. But the fact is we need these people for the city to grow. I believe that if we can get to know people, hear stories, listen to them, we will have that connection, we will build empathy and understanding. When we know better, we will do better.
- The City of Winnipeg without racism would exist when every single person feels welcomed, included, valued, respected in everything that they do and everywhere they live, work and play.

Panelist 3 Summary – Sylvia Boudreau

Sylvia Boudreau born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba is an Anishinabek Ikwe on a life journey in self-discovery to who she is and who she was born to be. Raised in the South and North parts of the city, Sylvia grew up without her culture and she has been working continuously at discovering who she feels she is in being. Sylvia works in the Community Development Division as a Community Crisis Worker.

Key Takeaways:

- Providing Elder Support; Elders are very instrumental in embracing the culture and an understanding of the many beautiful aspects of being Indigenous. The City of Winnipeg needs to provide an ongoing supportive environment where if staff want to seek out an Elder for spiritual guidance that a space is made for this to happen.
- Having spaces where staff can smudge when they are experiencing challenges in themselves as front line helpers or debriefing from Critical Incidents they may have witnessed for example.
- The City should make the Indigenous Employees Forum an event at least a couple of times a year where Indigenous City staff can see and network with folks in other departments.
- The City needs to offer a sweat lodge that is open to all to experience if they chose. This is a way to honor the First Peoples of Turtle Island.

Panelist 4 Summary – Dr. Chrispin Ntungo

Dr. Chrispin Ntungo first arrived in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada on 24th August 1988 from Zambia, Africa as a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, from which he graduated with a master's degree in 1992 and a Ph.D. in 1996. Before joining the City Chrispin worked with the then Angus Reid Group (1999) (later called Ipsos Reid) and Manitoba Public Insurance (1999-2002). He joined the City of Winnipeg in October 2002 in the Assessment and Taxation Department, where he still works as Supervisor of Strategic Support Services.

Key Takeaways:

- **Action.** As leaders in positions of authority commit to acting quickly when you see incidences of racism. Quick action will demonstrate and will send a message that you are not paying lip service but that you do mean what you say. You do not tolerate racism.
- **Trust.** If you are in a position of power teach yourself to trust racialized people around you. Trust their abilities and trust their judgment. Trust them with supervisory and managerial positions in the workplace.
- **Presence**. The city is cosmopolitan and so multicultural. As leaders, dare to work to ensure that there is diversity at all levels of the City's organizational structure. This is something you should do proudly and feel good about it. Racialized groups come to the city to be part of the city, not as parasites. They help expand the city and create more opportunities for everyone.
- **Encouragement.** Individuals in leadership positions should encourage racialized individuals to apply for high level positions. This, of course, takes friendship. Encouragement helps a great deal. It infuses confidence and it confirms to the person that they have an ally, someone who is interested in their progress and wellbeing. By so doing you can help break the ever-perceived glass ceiling.

Hidden Voices Summary

One integral piece of this event, is that it centers the voices of staff who are First Nations, Inuit, Metis Nation, Black, Racialized and Religious Minorities. Through shaping this event, it was important that the opportunity for staff who did not wish to share their experiences in such a public forum such as being a panelist would also be able to have their voices heard. Leading up to this event, a call was put out to staff wishing to participate either by being a panelist or sharing their experiences anonymously in a confidential setting where only the information and details they were comfortable sharing would be included in a summary that parts of would be shared with the audience at the City Voices Panel event.

The experiences shared by staff in these conversations included examples of racism firsthand, racism happening around them and the experiences of their colleagues facing racism and discrimination. Those who shared also talked about the changes they would like to see, who could contribute to them and what it would look like if Winnipeg was a city without racism. Racism shows up in many forms.

Racism shows up in many forms: Sometimes it can be more obvious, and other times it's more covert, working its way under the surface and impacting the experiences of people in more subtle ways. All the ways in which racism is expressed, has a profound impact on those who experience it. It is happening in Winnipeg, in our workplaces, when City staff are interacting with

the public, when colleagues are interacting with one another and it is something that is built into the structures and systems in our society.

There is a risk speaking up about racism: There is risk that comes with speaking up about racism, not only in a large forum of colleagues but in everyday life. Staff who are First Nations, Inuit, Metis Nation, Black, Racialized and Religious Minorities described it as a losing battle often times. If someone doesn't come forward and say something, they aren't doing enough to stand up for their community. But often, they know that their concerns and experiences are ignored, dismissed and minimized. They are told that when they have a concern, to bring it up and let it be known. When they raise the concern, they have been reprimanded and made an example of.

Staff who have spoken up about racism are met with resistance: Staff have been met with backlash that they didn't go through the proper channels of reporting, they are told that what happened to them isn't serious or that leadership knows that person and they know that person wouldn't be racist! It's these interactions, the ones when a staff person is feeling brave enough to come forward and share their experience which is then met with no support that makes them feel even more alienated and unimportant than before. These are the turning points where real meaningful change can happen. It is the responsibility and the duty of leadership to listen when staff come to them. To be an ally, be supportive, and take swift and meaningful action. We have heard from staff that listening is not enough. A supportive ear is a great start, but action that results in meaningful change is what really needs to happen.

The meaning of allyship: To be an ally, be supportive, is to take swift and meaningful action. We have heard from staff listening is not enough. A supportive ear is a great start, but action that results in meaningful change is what really needs to happen. Staff have shared about the importance of allyship, but also where it falls short. This has been identified as a performative allyship. For example, where there many ideas that get shared and discussed but non that result in action. If there is no actual action, it is something that looks outwardly good so that people can see what the City did, but it doesn't necessarily have any meaningful impact. It often seems like management are unaware of what performative allyship is and that they don't know how to recognize it. Staff sees little evidence of people educating themselves on what being an ally really means, there are very fre doing the work.

Spaces for all voices need to be created: When conversations do happen, it seems that some voices are listened to more than others. There are a lot of employees who are part time staff who are visible minorities that are rarely if ever asked about their opinions. When conversations around topics that touch on racism, informed conversations cannot be had without knowledge on the subject. People whose voices are heard the most are often expressing personal opinions that are not informed with anti-racist, anti-oppressive approaches. As employees of the City of Winnipeg there needs to be awareness and balance that reflects intellectual freedom versus social responsibility and serving the community. Diverse voices are needed around the table when these conversations are happening.

More training and solutions focused: Changes are being made but not enough solutions. As an organization the City waits until it's too late, until harm has already been done because they are risk averse and want to find the perfect solution when perfect isn't achievable. The City isn't offering enough training to staff. Many times, part time staff are not offered the training or given the opportunity to take it. The way that training around these subjects is done is inadequate. It

shouldn’t be the responsibility of staff to take it upon themselves to make changes. Many don’t see a need to change behaviour therefore they don’t do it. It can’t be a onetime thing. It needs to be ongoing and offered in many different ways that are adaptable to the ever-changing needs of staff.

Disclosure causing harm: For some that come forward, a long and grueling reporting process ends up being in some ways more damaging because after all that, that meaningful action never comes. Being called racial slurs by colleagues in the workplace, whether “joking” or not has happened to City employees. It has been expressed that there is a culture of if a staff person comes forward and tells someone about it, they are labelled as a rat. This has social consequences as well as potentially life-threatening ones. This makes people feel like people don’t want to associate with them, they feel discluded in the social and relational aspects of the workplace. But not only that, in certain circumstances especially for front-line workers and first responders. These instances whether it be indirect through knowing about their views through what colleagues post on social media, to the blow back that happens when staff come forward have serious implications. Staff talk about how disturbing it feels to know that these are the people they are supposed to trust with their lives and potentially the lives of their families and people who look like them. Will their family or people like them receive the proper care from people who have these views and say these racist things?

Perhaps it’s because the leadership responsible to address these problems and conflicts do not have the proper training, tools, and resources. The responsibility for solving these issues should not fall on First Nations, Inuit, Metis Nation, Black, Racialized and Religious Minorities, but listening to their voices and hearing what they have to say is a very important first step to finding solutions and working toward a future where we live and work in a city without racism.

Breakout Sessions Summary

Participants were put into 15 breakout rooms that each had a facilitator and note taker. Facilitators were either City staff or from external organizations. The groups had 10 minutes to discuss what they heard from the Panelists and the moderator. Facilitators used guiding questions to help facilitate the discussion. A note taker from each breakout session was assigned to take notes on the key messages discussed. It was mentioned by several groups that due to the short time frame of 10 minutes for the discussion, not all participants had the opportunity to share. Some groups were not able to discuss all of the questions.

Key Themes of Discussion:

- Racism in Winnipeg
- Responsibility
- Continuing the Conversation
- Hope for the Future

Breakout groups expressed their appreciation for the panelists sharing their stories and being vulnerable with their peers. Participants acknowledged that each panelist had different experiences of racism and the variety of stories presented made the participants realize how important listening is because everyone's challenges are different. Hearing from other City employees made them feel more connected to their experiences. Participants expressed how important it is to hear personal stories because it can assist in reflecting on one's own actions, how they are perceived and how actions affect others. Hearing the stories of individuals with lived experience was impactful to participants. It demonstrated the need for the City to create space for racialized people to be heard.

Participants expressed how scary it is that racism is still so prevalent in the city of Winnipeg. Participants who were not First Nations, Inuit, Metis Nation, Black, Racialized or a Religious Minority shared that there is less awareness about how racism impacts individuals. The panelists sharing firsthand experiences of racism allowed participants to be more aware of how their own behaviour might affect others and why it is important to be conscious of how they treat others. Some were unaware that these experiences are so widespread and how deeply rooted racism is in the City workplace. It was acknowledged how experiencing racism in the workplace can make your job more difficult and why it is important for all City employees to be advocates and allies.

It was discussed how every employee has a responsibility to be courageous to stand up against racism, to address it when it happens, and take care of one another. City employees need to accept and understand their privilege and use it for good to assess barriers in institutions, dismantle barriers, and create welcoming spaces. It is important that allegations are taken seriously, and need to be formally put in writing and timelines implemented to ensure follow up. When they take too long, they are costly financially and on one's mental health. City employees have a responsibility to learn and educate themselves about racism and different cultures. It helps staff to understand the perspectives of racialized people in the City and enables them to better serve the community. It is important to have supportive management that consistently support and listen to staff, lead by example and identify clear processes in how to report racism and support employees who experience it as well as those who report it. Management needs to create a welcoming environment with open communication to encourage staff to share concerns

of racism in the workplace. Establishing an environment of trust and mutual respect can ensure staff voices are heard and issues are promptly addressed.

Participants expressed how the panelist's stories made them realize how much there is still to learn about racism at the City. Anti-Racism efforts should continue on an ongoing basis because there is more work to be done. It is important to educate youth on racism in the City because the City is diverse and that discussions of racism need to be had at any age. Participants also acknowledged the privilege and power that exist within the City system can contribute to the marginalization of First Nations, Inuit, Metis Nation, Black, Racialized or a Religious Minority citizens. Meaningful cultural shifts can be made in the City by actively organizing employee knowledge, power and action.

Discussion occurred on the need for cultural safety and ongoing support for spiritual/cultural practices. For example, smudge rooms, sweat lodge opportunities, and resources for staff to access spiritual support and guidance. There is a need for safe spaces in the workplace for staff to be heard who have concerns and need support. There is also a need for an alternative process for speaking out against racism. For example, a new corporate resource or process for raising concerns when someone does not feel the direct approach is safe, such as an anonymous tip line.

Participants expressed feelings of hope to see a city without racism. It was acknowledged that racism is a learned behaviour and that it can be unlearned. While there are many negative experiences of racism, participants felt optimistic when hearing positive experiences because it allowed them to see that progress is being made and that a city without racism is possible.

Moderator's Reflections Summary

Beyond Performative Allyship: Calls for Urgent Action

- Effective Responses to Complaints
- Addressing Racism is a Shared Responsibility
- Anti-Oppression Education & Awareness Training
- More than a Sympathetic Ear

Recommendations for Institutional Change

- Listen to the voices and perspectives of staff most directly impacted by racism
- Empower and support staff to implement their ideas
- Take bold action to ensure diverse representation at all levels

Conclusion

In conclusion, the first ever City Voices Panel Discussion event had many successes as it was a meaningful and validating opportunity for the Panelists to share their stories, it brought awareness to the importance of Anti-Racism efforts at the City, and many City staff who participated shared about the profound impact it had on them to take part. With the over 240 participants, the overall response was positive and the majority were supportive of having this opportunity again. Many staff are interested in continuing the discussion in various formats that are conducive to having important and necessary discussions around Anti-Racism and what individuals as well as the City as an organization can do to make a difference. This event showed the importance of conversation, dialogue and making space to hear the experiences of staff who are First Nations, Inuit, Metis, Black, Racialized and Religious Minorities. It also provided many key takeaways, calls for urgent action, and recommendations for institutional change rooted in the knowledge of those with lived experience of racism.