

RESEARCH CONNECTION

Community voices: Inclusivity and anti-racism

By Michelle Lam, PhD, Denise Humphreys, Akech Mayuom, & Stephanie Spence



Why this research is important

In addition to Indigenous and settler community members, Brandon also experiences significant new immigration, particularly in recent decades due to the foreign labour recruitment of a large-scale meatpacking plant. Although racism is not a new issue, there is a clear need for deeper local understandings about the issue, partly because research on racism tends to be housed in larger urban centres and an increasing local concern about experiences of racism.

A local approach also allowed for an exploration of possible avenues forward through collaboration. Bringing together people from varied backgrounds, organizations, and agencies allowed for a robust discussion from multiple vantage points. While a single discussion is not the sum of

What you need to know

In light of the rise of hate crimes, racism, and xenophobia in Brandon, the Local Immigration Partnership and BU CARES Research Centre launched the *Community Voices Project*—a series of in-depth conversations about inclusivity and anti-racism and communities across Canada. This project sought to engage the community in conversation around these issues to deepen our collective understanding to make positive change.

knowledge about racism in Brandon, it is a starting place to grow, plan, and explore further.

How the research was conducted

The *Community Voices: Inclusivity and Anti-Racism* community conversation consisted of a virtual discussion facilitated by the Brandon Local Immigration Partnership and BU CARES Research Centre. The event was attended by 125 participants that represented a broad range of community members from education, health care, the Indigenous and newcomer communities, and many other backgrounds.

During the event, participants were invited to discuss questions in small groups. These discussions were recorded, the recordings transcribed, with personal information removed, and then the discussions were

compiled for analysis. The analysis consisted of theme identification through coding the transcriptions and through calculating word frequency.

What the researchers found

Many participants noted the importance of addressing the current realities of racism in the community. Many times speakers identified themselves as Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour (BIPOC). Multiple BIPOC speakers shared insight into how there may be a risk to their safety when standing up to racism and the exhaustion experienced through dealing with racism as a daily occurrence. Speakers who chose not to disclose their racialized identity and White participants noted other challenges and barriers in addressing racism in their communities. Some of these challenges and barriers were lack of collaboration, power differences, cost, “othering” language, resistance to change, lack of accountability, and ignorance.

Following this topic, speakers discussed the subject of opportunities to move forward. The results from this discussion included the need to bring up opportunities through education, to increase conversation and action, increase the onus on White community members, to find clear pathways to foster accountability, to increase support for newcomers, and to address issues of privilege and systemic racism. Some further suggestions to take action included using grassroots approaches for change, facilitating community connections, addressing barriers to participation, multicultural festival expansion, incentivizing students to learn anti-racism, and creating learning hubs.

How this research can be used

Diverse conversations like community voices inform possible avenues toward belonging. The barriers and challenges identified, along with suggested opportunities for future directions, can be used to

inform social change, inclusivity, and anti-racism initiatives by both individuals and local organizations to work toward anti-racism and belonging.

About the researchers

Dr. Michelle Lam is the director of BU CARES and a member of Curriculum and Pedagogy.

Lamm@brandonu.ca

Denise Humphreys is a research assistant with BU CARES Research Centre at Brandon University. She is also a master’s student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba. Humphreysd@brandonu.ca

Akech Mayuom is a research assistant with BU CARES Research Centre and student in the Faculty of Nursing at Brandon University. Mayuomajoo@brandonu.ca

Stephanie Spence is a research assistant with BU CARES Research Centre and student in pre-nursing at Brandon University. Spence2993@brandonu.ca

Keywords

belonging, anti-racism, community

Publication based on this research

Lam, M., Humphreys, D., Mayuom, A., Spence, S., & Stone, G. (2021). *Community voices: Anti-racism report*. Brandon, Manitoba, Canada: BU CARES Research Centre. <https://www.brandonu.ca/bu-cares/files/2021/07/Community-Voices-Report-July.pdf>

Acknowledgements

Research Connection is a periodical publication intended to provide information about the impact of Brandon University’s academic research and expertise on public policy, social programming, and professional practice. This summary is supported by the Office of Research Services, the Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies, and the federally funded Research Support Fund.

Editor: Christiane Ramsey Ramseyc@brandonu.ca
<http://www.brandonu.ca/research-connection>

BRANDON UNIVERSITY

Brandon University, founded in 1899, promotes excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship, and educates students so that they can make a meaningful difference as engaged citizens and leaders. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Thank you to ResearchImpact-RéseauImpactRecherche (researchimpact.ca) for their permission to adapt the ResearchSnapshot clear language research summary format.

