

## Thought Leaders Comments

### Thought Leaders Conversation #1

Tuesday November 30, 2021

6:00-8:00 p.m.

#### Main themes:

Disaggregated race-based data

- “Prioritizing that [race-based data] needs to be at the forefront of this work”
- “The ways in which we are racialized are diverse”
- “So that we have an intimate understanding of our communities and we can channel resources in the right direction”

Interconnectedness of systems (health system, housing system, justice system)

Intersectionality

The importance of resources

- “I would never reduce racism to resources, but resources are a key to how structural racism operates”
- “Quite often you find that a lot of the momentum that is created around this [anti-racism] is a lot of unpaid labour”

Understanding of race and racism that is both historically and locally specific

- “The mechanisms by which racism operates might differ from place to place. More sustainable and applicable solutions need local understanding.”
- “That local history is oral. We need to honour the people who have it. And honour all the people we get knowledge from.”

Sensitivity to Indigenous experiences

- “I think the Truth and Reconciliation Commission gives us lots of insight into how we can do anti-racism work. It calls on more than just the provincial and federal government, but municipal and other systems.”
- Lived experience of Indigenous peoples is different from other racialized people
- “Indigenous people’s involvement in anti-racism strategies has been unclear even in the history of the City of Edmonton. Who gives license? I don’t think it comes from council. [...] We haven’t done that well; if we can go slower and

say how this strategy is different from and parallel to different Indigenous strategies”

### Trauma

- “Our whole society is suffering base-line trauma from experiences of racism and inequity. And also from coming from people who perpetuate racism and inequity. There’s a trauma there. Much more widespread access to mental health services is key in stopping hate-based violence. And healing from hate-based violence”
- Experiences of intergenerational trauma

### Policing and its role in racialization

#### **Specific Ideas/Feedback:**

- Adoption of the international decade of people of African descent by the City of Edmonton
  - “We want the City to adopt, understand, and put resources towards the international decade of people of African descent”
  - *Idea supported by multiple participants*
  - Having a framework to work towards can be helpful in tackling a specific issue
  - “I love the idea of adopting the decade. But tying it to some concrete policy that’s in the sphere of control of the City of Edmonton. Example: the 15 dollar minimum wage is anti-racist and it cannot be undone by other parties”
- A dedicated phone number in Edmonton or Alberta specifically for antiracism/reporting experiences of racism
  - Note: Research shows that more empowered groups report, and the least empowered groups never report
  - An opportunity to collect data for a more accurate picture of what’s happening
  - Need to create a system where there is more trust
  - Reporting shouldn’t be linked to whether something will be considered a crime or not
  - Have the line operated by trained Black, Indigenous, and People of Color respondents
  - *Idea supported by multiple participants*
- Include capacity building in the strategy

## Attachment 7

- Support from the city “doesn’t just look like dollars and cents, but listening to them and giving them advice on how they run their community groups or businesses”
- Capacity building should be more than “nuts and bolts operational”. Include “resources for helping with trauma healing, lateral violence, etc. Pieces that affect a group’s ability to grow and be influential”.
- A commitment to education
  - “a commitment to providing our students (particularly k-12)\_ an unvarnished account of Canadian history, particularly that comes to race and racism”
  - “a requirement that all teachers engage in anti-racism journeys”
- A commitment to funding groups, initiatives etc. that centre anti-racism
  - “There should be a priority placed on creating some sort of funding strategy for groups/initiatives in this area”
  - “The City should fund baseline admin dollars to every social change NFP to counter the not-for-profit industrial complex that makes BIMPoC orgs struggle for survival and does not give us the adequate means to have thought leadership in our organizations or to engage in communities that would truly make us accountable.”
- Anti-racism knowledge/skills should be competencies in leadership positions
  - Through FCSS the city has a sphere of influence to exert – it should no longer be optional for leadership of social change organizations to have anti-racism competencies
  - “Make it not okay to make anti-racism optional. Good work is anti-racist work. Especially for social change organizations”
  - *Idea supported by multiple participants*
  - These should also be competencies for teachers and school administration
- An actionable strategy with accountability and review timelines
  - “In order for a strategy to be meaningful, it needs to have timelines and dollar amounts to it”
  - “We should be brave enough to name who will be responsible”
- A Gay Straight Aliances -like model in schools for anti-racism
  - Gay Straight Aliances have been impactful and successful in building empathy.
  - A need to address who is perpetuating race-based violence
  - Expand the way our society thinks of mental health
- Defunding the police / “Community justice, restorative justice – want to put that on the table alongside the other idea.”
  - *Idea supported by multiple participants*

**Other:**

- Expression of hope for the term 'collaborative decision making' in the motion
- "Turning the lens up" – "people like Kim Tallbear focuses on turning the lens up. Not just focusing on the deficits, but what's happening for the ppl at the top who are creating the conditions that drive those outcomes."
- Act while we have a mayor and council that's onsite
  - Connect these things at the policy level so that they cannot be undone
  - *Expressed by multiple participants*
- "I would like the terminology at the city to change from GBA+ to anti-racism and intersectionality. Adding the plus is not enough."
- "Racism is an economic structure. That is why it was created, that is how it has been mobilized, and that is why racialized communities are at the bottom of the economic structure."

**Thought Leaders Conversation #2**

Thursday December 2, 2021

5:30-7:30p.m.

**Main themes:**

Intersectionality

- Ensure that we distill whatever strategies we come up with in these various dimensions [race, gender etc] in order to be able to address them
- "If we're doing any consultation, we need to be mindful of the intersections in our consultations to make sure people feel included."

Role of police

- "We need to address anti-black anti-Indigenous hate. It does exist in our city police. "
- "The whole institution of policing needs to be reimagined. Policing was created to police black bodies."

Hate crimes/hate incidents

- The need for community input
- "Garnered by the community"

Too short a timeframe

- This work has to be long term

Definition of antiracism

- “Antiracism means to be critical of the systems in which we work. And then doing something about it”
- Cultural sensitivity is different than antiracism - <http://www.edchange.org/publications/Avoiding-Racial-Equity-Detours-Gorski.pdf> - the author really makes it clear that talking about "culture" rather than race and racism is a big detour in racial equity efforts
- “Focusing on anti-racism shifts the focus from the victim to the perpetrator or the systems”
- Anti-racism is not EDI, it’s not multicultural
- It is questioning the systems that work interconnectedly (housing, mental health, safe consumption sites – these are all anti-racism)
- “I would consider using the word “Intersectional anti-racism”

Publicly available race-based data

Racism is everyone’s problem

- “Shift racism from a problem of only racialized people. It affects health. It affects economic development of the whole city. It’s a problem for everyone, not just racialized individuals.”

Evaluation & accountability

- “We need to think about how we plan on measuring? What does success look like? What are indicators? We need to qualify and quantify. Maybe we plan evaluation timelines based on this City Council/Mayor.”
- Environment and Climate Change Canada has a great Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategy. Their strategy is specific, measured, they have tracking. Of course there are issues with it, but this one is one of the better ones. We could model a lot of our strategy around this one.

### **Specific Ideas/Feedback EXTERNAL**

School system

- We have anti-black and anti-indigenous issues in our curriculums and our textbooks.
- After the backlash of getting School Resource Officers out of schools, “Schools can’t even call Edmonton Police Service when they’re having issues because ‘nobody’s friends anymore’. It’s crazy how these systems intersect.”
- Schools need culturally relevant psychotherapists
- We need to put money into school systems above the level of ‘band-aid approaches’
- Elementary schools have a major role in socialization – we need to make it a positive impact for anti-racism

Establish a commission on hate incidents at a provincial level

Community leagues as a site of opportunity

- Improve community leagues – a lot of community leagues are white-based organizations

### **Specific Ideas/Feedback INTERNAL**

The city should mandate Edmonton Police Services that hate based violence is a priority for the city

- Tie this to a line of funding
- Need for a hate crime unit
- Currently the community has no confidence in the seriousness of hate based violence from the city/EPS

An action-oriented strategy + rooted in community

- Tap into organizations’ knowledge – “Organizations have documents on documents. On lived experience of community”

Have a system to keep you accountable

- Accountability process needs to be intersectional
- Evaluation process needs to be intersectional
- Make anti-racism a priority for city funding of organizations
- “Is it possible for funding programs by the city to have something that deals with ‘how does your proposal integrate anti-racism principles?’”
- Integrate questions on anti-racism into reporting requirements
- The city can hold organizations to account who rely on receiving city funding

### Declare racism a public health emergency

- Other places have done so. It's time that Edmonton did

### Policing reform

- "I believe in very strongly that police reform is at the epicentre of any anti-racism effort. If we do not reform the police (EPS), we have not started"
- Quality of policing recruits – ". Most of the jurisdictions that have the best outcomes in the world require a 3 to 4 year bachelor degree in order to become officers. We are currently at a grade 12. It is not good enough. The ranks of killer cops (the most extreme end) is populated with police without university degrees. Those who are more likely to use excessive force (or even rely on force) are those without university degrees."

### Opportunity for city officials to set an example

- The power of appearances in the media by counsellors and the mayor on issues or racism
- "Governmental entities are powerful entities. Not just the power they wield but because of their symbolism."
- "Elected leaders can do a lot by modeling things"

### Create a commission on hate incidents

- because of course not all incidents make it to the threshold of crime.
- It could provide educational materials, counselling, so on.

### Environmental scan of what other initiatives have been done by other cities in the past.

- Look up best practices - Toronto, Nova Scotia, there may be things in the U.S

### Other:

- "Have you read Sarah Ahmed's work? The city is still an institution. And institutions want to look like they're doing something."
- "I would be interested for people to have to mention racial equality +. When you say GBA+ no one knows that the plus means."
- Importance of belonging
  - Belonging is one of the most vital influences on mental health of Black Canadians

- Improve community leagues – a lot of community leagues are white-based organizations
- “We are already oversurveilled and overpoliced. How might we imagine approaches that are non-punitive? Everyone that has spoken has mentioned proactive healing approaches. We need the healing. Now we need to create connections and spaces for that. The beautification of our communities – these things are all interconnected.”

**Thought Leaders Conversation #3**

Tuesday December 7, 2021

6:00-8:00 p.m.

**Main Themes:**

Accountability

The fact that this is the inaugural motion brings lots of opportunity and hope

Use this window [the current mayor] to make a long term impact

The importance of ‘working with community in a collaborative way’

- That’s empowering
- This means the ability to make decisions and guide this process

Timeline. This work takes time. The question of anti-racism is big.

There is no right answer

- “The system’s answer to anti-racism is part of the problem. There is no one right answer. There is always room for growth and we will always make mistake.”
- “This work is messy”

Intersectionality

- Focus on racialized youth who are part of the 2SLGBTQ community

The role of systems

You can’t do this work without risk

“Get uncomfortable” is the first commandment of anti-racism work



- If council is comfortable, then something is wrong with the strategy

Educating <city> council

- or call it “co-creation of our understanding of racism and its solutions’
- Analogy “We have different grades in the same room and they are asking us to develop a curriculum.”

What is the vision of ‘Success’?

- “If we don’t have a clear vision of what we’re working towards, then where we land will be the right destination.”
- “We should be talking about ‘what is a success? Then when we agree on that,
- we come back to how we will resource that success. What do councillors see as a success?”

The importance of environment in behaviour change

### **Specific Ideas/Feedback INTERNAL:**

Have the office report to someone high up

- “like when it reported to the deputy mayor in the past it got more done”

Let’s build on ceremony, Let’s invest in the Indigenous pace

Let’s do something so practical that you might not call it anti-racism, but it is, like a living wage

Give our leaders incentives to do anti-racism training or education

- Make anti-racism competencies for getting hired or promoted in the city

Take one of the most vulnerable communities who experience racism and do something meaningful with that specific community and learn from it

- Maybe start with Black Muslim Women
- Meaningfully engage the city, engage the councillors etc. in that process; so that they are invested in this and learn from it and approve it being done with another community

Two possible approaches: 1. create an aspirational document; 2. Develop specific strategies for specific populations impacted by racism

- Or you could do both
- The broader the focus, the more likely you will develop a strategy that is high level [and not actionable]
- “the question of anti-racism strategy is big. If we have to answer that question, I worry we will have to make an aspirational document which will not have real impact for the communities that are impacted.”

There needs to be specific action plans to address the system

- “any kind of work in this strategy has to have a component that is Systems focused, rather than just working with community”

February 14<sup>th</sup> is not realistic

- What if we just come back to council and say ‘hey, this is complicated. You know it, we know it. That’s all we came back with in 3 months’.
- [See themes on timelines and messiness]
- “Something is possible for February 14, but an anti-racism solution will not be possible. We need to set the expectation that not everything will be done for February 14.”
- For February 14<sup>th</sup> you could start by setting up what success would look like
- “I agree that the councillors may be ready to take a risk. They’re new. But sometimes it’s the people in the system who don’t want to take a risk. Because they’ve been mandated, they’ve been asked. They may not get that not giving an answer is the answer.”
- “We’ve talked about this motion being tangibly. Unrealistic. But what I think it does – it builds some inertia. Some currency that it has. So is there a way to harness and catalyze on this? We’ve done this before – you can get a motion
- from council, and come back and say we’re not here with a strategy, but we’re here with a glimpse of what success looks like. It’s enough to keep inertia going.”
- “If we’re too focused on how not to lose momentum in the system, you will lose community buy-in.”

Idea of pillars

- “An education pillar. An investment pillar. Even naming certain pillars can bring people a lot of hope. Knowing that there’s policy, leadership development, financial investment....In addition, having principles of HOW we’re going to get to those answers. Community centered, exploration of different forms of knowledge etc”

An outcome: City staff reflect the makeup of the city

- Structural changes could be put as a benchmark

Most people can't learn in this area unless it's relationally. Most people cannot just read this and learn it.

- Training and one-offs – we know they have no lasting impact when it comes to attitude change. There needs to be follow-up and continued support

*Who should we talk to?*

"I think if you talk to community members most affected by racism - then you talk to them about what Sharif said: what change do you want to see in your own life because this anti-racism strategy worked ...."

"I think you should talk to people who make you uncomfortable. I think you should find out from Sam who is 'combustible' and you should talk to those people. They will point out our blind spots"

**Other:**

"[www.apolitical.co](http://www.apolitical.co), which is a UK website highlighting the best in public service. It might be worth checking out for any anti-racism resources they may have. Or start putting our own on there."

When every problem that you see is about money, then you think the solution is money

"I like some of the concepts of design work where you try something and learn from it. But I also like research. And I think that both together are important."

"There's no way by February 14th that you're going to get buy-in from everyone. I know there's value in getting the perspectives of those who don't talk to me. We all know that takes time. If you really want this to work, you're going to have to take a risk. You can't do this work without risk."

<https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/characteristics.html>

"I have been a proponent of putting an anti-racism committee in place. But I don't anymore. That was learning for me. Because the City Council should be the anti-racism committee for our city. It touches everything. So if you put together a committee with no teeth, it can't move the needle."

“Going back with some kind of a document that will plant the seed and allow you to do

some more community work would be the best way I think. And right away starting to educate people that this is an uncomfortable strategy. It’s not your snow removal. It’s not your potholes. Those are tied to money, these are tied to emotions, feelings, relationships – everything about being human.”

**Thought Leaders Conversation #4**

Thursday December 9, 2021

4:00-6:00

**Main Themes:**

Previous work in this area has been done by the city – What of that can we use?

Worry that a strategy could turn into giving police more money

The need to define racism for the strategy

Importance of context

- Context determines content [in EDI]
- Learn from other municipalities, but do not cut and paste

People are tired of optical allyship

Data and metrics are important

- And make them openly available

Collaboration and supporting work that is already being done

- Edmonton has untapped potential

We need long term sustainability in this work

- We don’t want to rely on the mayor’s re-election for this work to continue

Be aspirational and not punitive

Address white supremacy and white resentment

**Specific Ideas/Feedback:**

There are good pieces from previous City of Edmonton anti-racism strategies that could be acted upon

When I think about a strategy, I think of how it can be actioned and owned by the city without having to rely on provincial government.

- “When we rely so much on provincial and federal funding, we get stuck in these cycles dependant on governments.”

Define systemic racism

- “With the three parts of the motion, “hate-based violence” is the only named part of racism. So if we address this, then have we in fact addressed racism in the city?”

Be strategic with other levels of government

- “Maybe it’s about anti-violence at the provincial level and anti-racism at the federal level.”

Provide support for city staff to implement the strategy

- “Senior leaders aren’t going to be the issue, it’s when it filters down to your directors and managers who might not be on the same page. What I’ve observed is you have well intentioned managers who want to do the right thing, but they have no idea where to start. Setting them up for failure within the team.”

Educating the “sleepy middle” is an audience to focus on

Have a database – the evidence of racism

- “You have citizens working to do this work. Why isn’t the city doing it? I think this kind of infrastructure would show its commitment to this plan. And its sustainability.”
- “violence is the form we can see, but what about the other aspects of racism that are less visible, but impact our communities, how are we tracking that data to inform our processes?”
- We need to give easy access to what data there already is and we need to collect new/more data

Support local initiatives doing intersectional approaches to anti-racism.

Invest in tangible structures for anti-racism work within the City

- “looking at other municipalities, reviewing how the city of Toronto has in the last three years expanded their EDI, human rights office, dedicated anti-black racism employees. Montreal hired an anti-racism directorate. Vancouver had established a chief diversity officer position. I think it’s a matter of seeing where does Edmonton fit amongst all this? I think there might be appetite there. Seeing how a position would be able to carry on this work.”
- Positions that have significant input and impact. Having some tangible reach
- “You need dedicated resources around anti-racism work. It takes committed positions from what I’ve observed. It also takes it out of the hands of police. So police stay in their lane and focus on crimes.”
- “You cannot default to the diversity unit. You need appropriate oversight.”

We need to be collaborative

- “There are community groups really passionate and doing the work, but there is a competition for resources for funding, we are not being as effective”
- “we also need to acknowledge what has already been built but we are not letting access to”
- Take this opportunity to empower organizations so they are set up for success even after our mayor changes
- The city is uniquely positioned to support this work in organizations through funding

How can we use the things that are already established in our city?

- Heritage days has a lot of untapped potential
- “Don’t have to burn it all down, we can look at the architecture and see what can be remodeled.”

We need to address white supremacy

- “This idea of white racial resentment. It’s important to focus on the work of individuals and prioritize those with lived experience. AND alongside that tackle white supremacy and white racial resentment.”
- “An aspiration - have our mayor be able to talk about white supremacy and not have to walk that back.”

Education is not enough

- “It’s not enough to know. Education is not enough. It’s the practice that goes along with it. Giving clear strategies. If I don’t know what to do about it, then I’ll do nothing. Bring it to something I can relate to in my space.”

### Other:

See more potential and leverage at the federal government currently than the provincial government

- Note: Another participant countered to not ignore the provincial government.

What are we doing to ensure that talent stays in our city?

- “Show the rest of the country that we’re not as far behind as the rest of the country believes without alienating the rest of our province?”

“You want your leaders to be talking about this to make real change, but you also want them to know what they’re talking about. When leaders use the buzz words around anti-racism, if they were to be put on blast by community members and asked “what does anti-racism mean to you?” I worry they would stumble on their words.”

“Racism has been built into our systems for a very long time. Part of the report needs to contextualize the history of racism. And spell out the manifestations of racism and what we know now and this is what we are addressing. So you’re able to articulate what you’re working to address right now, knowing society continues to evolve. That also give some grace. We also know how quickly people will turn when it doesn’t look like you’ve done what you said you would do.”

Address mental health support for everyone [not just those who have experienced racism or violence directly]

“We are trained to go to solutions that we know are not effective solutions. We overuse and exploit the people who are suffering the consequences of this system. When you put the work on certain populations, it’s exhausting.”