

CBE CARES!

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WHAT WE HEARD

REPORT

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APRIL 2021

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*This Report has been prepared by Dr. Marie Delorme of The Imagination Group
at the request of
Christopher Usih, Chief Superintendent of Schools, Calgary Board of Education
and is a compilation of information gathered between
November 2020 and March 2021
from the CBE CARES! Advisory Council
and from Listening Sessions which engaged
Parents, Guardians, CBE Staff, and Indigenous Elders.*

*The veracity and validity of the information gathered
has not been investigated or verified.*

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Summary

In June 2020, the Calgary Board of Education launched the Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports (CBE CARES!) initiative. Focused on advancing equity, anti-racism, and inclusion, CBE CARES! engaged external expertise to facilitate sessions held in 2020 and early 2021. This Report presents the voices of the parents, caregivers, students, staff, community members, and Indigenous Elders who generously gave their time, shared their stories, and provided potential next steps for consideration by CBE.

Comprised of a broad representation of internal stakeholders, the CBE CARES! Advisory Council shared their experiences and provided guidance on strategies and action plans to address racism and discrimination within the CBE schools and workplaces.

Parents, guardians, and staff participated in a series of listening sessions. The goal of these virtual discussion forums was to understand their experiences and needs, and to ultimately inform the development of concrete, implementable actions to address racism and discrimination.

Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers met with the CBE Indigenous Education Team to impart their wisdom and advice. These sessions were facilitated by the CBE Indigenous Education Team.

Many participants conveyed that the CBE CARES! initiative was a very positive first step towards meaningful change. A number of contributors also sent emails outlining their appreciation for being asked to engage in the discussions, whether through a listening session or via email. In particular, those who participated in sessions acknowledged the importance of the discussions occurring in a safe space and that they felt listened to, acknowledged, and validated.

This Report contains a literature review conducted by the University of Calgary. This contextual review of scholarly sources on the topics of anti-racism, inclusion, and equity in school jurisdictions across Canada and elsewhere is designed to ensure that the CBE is informed of relevant current and emerging issues. When combined with the suggestions of students, families, Elders, and staff, the literature review will help to shape strategies to advance anti-racism, equity, and inclusion within the CBE.

This “What We Heard” Report is intended to accurately and concisely summarize the voices of all who provided input to the CBE during this first step. The many people who attended the sessions and who sent emails delivered two clear messages:

Name it. Publicly announce that the voices of students, parents, guardians, staff, and Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers have been heard; acknowledge that racism and discrimination are real barriers to an inclusive and equitable environment.

Commit to action. Publicly share new initiatives specifically designed to address racism and discrimination. Be open and transparent about the fundamental principles and values of the CBE, that these are non-negotiable, and that racism and discrimination will not be tolerated.

Potential next steps from session participants are presented through overarching principles supported by ten (10) themes: communication, curriculum, data, discussion forums, hiring and promotion, places and spaces, policies, recognition and celebrations, resources, and training and development. These potential next steps serve as a roadmap for the CBE as it advances a culturally responsive, racially just, and trauma-informed approach to building a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for everyone.

“We all need to create an environment where children can thrive and be the best they can be.”

Parent

Summarized Methodology

In undertaking this study, four lines of inquiry were conducted to better understand the experiences, issues, and suggestions of students, staff, parents, guardians, and Indigenous Elders and to explore current academic knowledge in the areas of racism, inclusion, and equity.

Advisory Council

The Advisory Council was comprised of thirty-eight (38) appointed and selected representatives of students, staff, associations, administration, and the board who expressed their interest in participating in CBE CARES! Guided by a Terms of Reference, the Advisory Council participated in discussions, engaged with their communities of interest, and offered advice to the Chief Superintendent on strategies to advance anti-racism, equity, and inclusion within the CBE. The Advisory Council engaged in four (4) facilitated meetings between November 2020 and February 2021. Discussions were held in both plenary and breakout group formats.

Listening Sessions

Three parent and caregiver listening sessions were held in January and February 2021. An external organization was engaged to conduct a random selection from the five hundred and fifty-nine (559) parents and guardians who responded to an open call for expressions of interest. Three hundred invitations were extended, one hundred for each session. One hundred and thirty-two (132) participants attended virtual sessions on January 28, February 4, and February 18. Through semi-structured breakout groups participants shared their experiences, perspectives, and insights about racism, discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion. The sessions were a safe space for parents and caregivers who were assured that they would not be identified as the source of any comment in the Report. The Chief Superintendent and representatives of Board of Trustees and Superintendents attended as silent observers.

A staff listening session was held on February 22, 2021. An external organization conducted a random selection of one hundred (100) invitees from the two hundred and sixteen (216) staff who had expressed an interest in, but who were not selected for, the Advisory Council. Forty-eight (48) participants attended the staff listening session. The Chief Superintendent attended the staff listening session as a silent observer.

Listening sessions were recorded for reporting purposes only with recordings being deleted upon finalization of the Report. Participants, those who indicated an interest in attending a session, and the wider community were invited to send emails with their comments and advice. Emails were received from one hundred and twenty-nine (129) community members and thirty-five (35) CBE staff. Each received an email reply and many of their comments are included in the Report.

Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers

Between January and March 2021, members of the CBE Indigenous Education Team met individually with eleven Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers who provided sage observations and advice on how racism and inclusion can be addressed for the benefit of teachers, students, and families.

Literature Review

The University of Calgary was engaged to conduct a literature review. Articles and reports from academic institutions and agencies were reviewed to explore themes related to racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. The literature review focused on better understanding current and emerging issues relevant to the local context, forms of racism and discrimination in schools, and effective strategies for addressing racism and discrimination.

What We Heard

Voices of Students

The student members of the CBE CARES! Advisory Council shared their experiences and observations on how racism and discrimination has impacted their lives, their peers, and their families. They discussed how school leaders can model the way in speaking up about systemic injustices by calling attention to the issues, discussing collective action, and engaging students in creating a safe space for everyone at the CBE.

Students emphasized that their voices must be heard and that there is a strong need to address the lived experiences of Indigenous, Black, and students of colour in the education system. Students further emphasized the importance of education that is culturally relevant and responsive, as this is a critical component of their sense of belonging and their engagement in learning.

The following concepts and themes summarize what was heard from students who participated on the Advisory Council.

Identity

The issue of identity is central to the experience of students in the school system. One student explained:

For a first-generation or even second-generation immigrant it's really difficult to align our cultural values with some of the values that we see or witness at school.

This statement was corroborated by another student who said, “we all come from different walks of life, culturally and racially, so we're all going to think different ways and act different ways and sometimes that creates a lot of barriers and misunderstandings between each other.”

Confidence

Some students felt that a lack of self-confidence manifests in the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and mental health issues in society generally, and with students particularly. When students are confident and comfortable with who they are it is reflected in their interactions with others.

One student stressed the importance of “giving students the confidence to communicate some of those things, some of those differences that they have so that they can get a more inclusive learning environment”. Another agreed, stating:

At my school, we don't really have a lot of Black students there so finding the confidence to speak out for the Black community is kind of intimidating, facing so many people that don't really understand what we're going through. And our teachers and our principal have been really trying to put out messages and show us that they're our ally and we're not alone.



What issues, barriers, or concerns prevent students, teachers, and staff from enjoying an inclusive and supportive experience in the current environment?

“The problem isn’t just one person; it is multiple people with that close-minded perspective.”

Stereotyping

In explaining how stereotyping impacts the school environment one student observed that:

In every school I've been to, there's been a specific Indigenous classroom or some sort of Indigenous program that they sort of force all the Indigenous students in. And to me personally and the rest of the Indigenous people, it makes us uncomfortable, and it doesn't feel inclusive.

The dialogue on stereotyping was encapsulated another student who said...

When you are one of the only people that stand out as a certain sexuality or race, you are that stereotype and you are kind of being the face of the race inside that school is a very scary thing, especially when things like the Black Lives Matter movement or something like that does come up.

Students reflected on the impact that the naming of places and spaces have on individuals or groups and how these symbols of oppression and racism represent both historical and present-day barriers and serve to reinforce stereotypes.

Imagine walking through the doors of a building named after someone who abused and potentially killed your people. That just really struck me and hit me... made me think differently about how we name our building and who we choose to commemorate.

In discussing microaggressions, which are the subtle words and actions that are offensive or hurtful, students explained how these reinforce stereotypes. Because microaggressions are not overt, thereby harder to detect, this ambiguity can leave students questioning the source of their discomfort. A student illuminated this point...

I was born in Canada, but my parents are immigrants. And going to school, I started to get kind of embarrassed. It was hard to balance my culture and our values versus what we're taught in school and it's just little microaggressions...how your parents speak at parent-teacher interviews, your food at lunch. It could be just little things that people don't realize that really take a toll on a person.

Data Collection

Students discussed the value of collecting data on incidents of racism. Recognizing that the racial diversity of schools varies, it is important to gather this information for each school and each area. Understanding the demographics is a starting point for building equitable school communities.



What practices and approaches to address barriers could be incorporated within the CBE?

Difficult Conversations

The role of teachers is key to encouraging and navigating difficult conversations in order to help students learn and grow in constructive ways. One student gave an example of a teacher’s approach to an incident involving a student who drew a very racist picture of an ethnic stereotype saying, “the teacher just sat him down in the hallway and talked to him about why that was wrong.” The student explained that this approach was effective as it didn’t focus on punishment but rather on educating, as “some people do not know that what they did or said was wrong.”

Addressing racist, insensitive, and ignorant comments that occur in the school and classroom environment requires that teachers possess unique skills to ask the hard questions while creating an environment that enables students to voice their opinions. Teachers should be prepared to acknowledge their own vulnerabilities. One participant explained that...

In order for teachers to go in there and talk about racism fluently, they need to remove that narrative of saving minorities. And I think they need to be able to admit when they're wrong or admit they don't know something. And that's when they need to contact outside sources like Elders, who can tell the true history from our point of view, instead of being whitewashed.

“Issues of race have come up in the news and we talked about different perspectives. I feel like it really opens up opportunities.”

Students agreed that teachers must have the ability to listen to students, process the information, and integrate this into classroom discussions as well as utilize the information to teach future classes and to educate their peers. Students recognized that staff would need support to be able to engage in difficult conversations about racism.

As the media increasingly covers topics about racism, students emphasized the responsibility that teachers have to bring these topics into their classrooms because young people want to be engaged in the conversation. When addressed effectively, these discussions provide learning opportunities. This requires that teachers establish a safe and respectful environment in the classroom, have the ability to contextualize the media coverage, and inspire students to build a more equitable world. Students emphasized that when teachers discuss the news with them it provides a real-world context to their learning and helps students understand the global context of their lives and to explore similarities and differences with their classmates.

By encouraging other ways of knowing and reading a lot of poems by mostly predominantly like Black boys, we were just able to see, like a different perspective than we would because we just read from white boys. So, the teacher just wanted us to see that contrast and seeing the different perspectives... it was really good, in my opinion.

When students are provided with an environment where they can speak out without fear of repercussions, they can explore and address challenging issues. One student drew an example where a teacher gave students a platform to speak about how racism impacts people differently “my friend is Asian, and she was able to make a video where she was talking about her experiences with discrimination and how normalized it is towards her race.”

Another student talked about the role of teachers and principals in making it easier for racialized students to have a voice, explaining that “our principal has put up messages and different articles about white privilege, like what it is, how Black lives matter...like they have made a point to show that throughout the school so that students see it as they go around the school; that makes sense.



What are effective ways for CBE to change attitudes by addressing indifference, passivism, or lack of knowledge?



How can students be empowered to speak out about issues and experiences?

Respectful cross-cultural connections between students are facilitated when the environment encourages people to speak to one another in the spirit of learning to understand differences and similarities.

...like kind of showing each other's different cultures, right? Because a lot of times, we're not friends, because we don't get each other's cultures and like how we act when we want to stick to our culture, because that's what we're comfortable with. So, we just need to do something to be able to shine light on those different cultures.

A student had strong views on how Indigenous students were treated and the need for this to end. The student's call to action was "to stop grouping the Indigenous students. In all the schools I've been to those Indigenous-only rooms offend all of us. So grouping is all together based off of our ethnicity as a collective as Indigenous is offending to me, you wouldn't put a German person, an English person in a Russian person in one room together because they're white. Because we're Indigenous, it's offensive, and they need to get rid of it."

Commitment to Action

Students provided a number of specific, implementable ways to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- Create diversity councils that are open to any student, in every school where students request a council be formed. Councils would organize events, hold discussion groups, and create a fun, inclusive environment that encourages students to join. Modelled on gay-straight alliances or queer-straight alliances, diversity councils create a safe, supportive space for students.
- Select diverse books as a resource for schools and teachers to connect their students with authors who are Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour. One student explained that "there are better books to choose than *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which is a white saviour book...we can probably find a better book on the same issue."
- Create safe and inclusive physical environments for students who are visually impaired by installing braille signage in all schools, offering braille textbooks, and producing written materials in a larger font.
- Ensure that all spaces accommodate students with special accessibility requirements.
- Engage in discussions on the historical and spiritual origins of holidays and why some elements of celebrations are offensive. A student explained that "instead of having students creating big headdresses for Thanksgiving, explain why that is offensive, about Christopher Columbus, and genocide...that is specific and actionable."
- Move beyond recognizing and celebrating only certain cultures during certain "assigned" weeks in the year. Ensure that schools are celebrating a variety of cultures and diverse individuals throughout the year.
- Celebrate and elevate the accomplishments of how people from all cultures contribute in positive ways to society.
- Develop materials and information that parents can use to dismantle racism in discussions with their children.
- Train teachers to be allies and to engage in conversations about racism, diversity, and inclusion.
- Display flags in the school that represent the diversity of students, so that everyone feels seen and respected.
- Recognize the variety of languages in the school by including even a few words or a greeting in announcements.
- Continue to standardize the use of Indigenous land acknowledgements in all schools.
- Encourage teachers to share their pronouns with their students.
- Instill a culture of respect by requiring teachers to model the way in properly pronouncing students' names.



How can schools encourage cross-cultural student interactions?



What specific, concrete actions can CBE implement to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

What is the role of the CBE, schools, teachers, parents, guardians, and students?

Voices of Parents and Caregivers

“If we don’t push, it won’t change.”

Listening session participants took the opportunity to express their appreciation for being engaged in these conversations. Many participants and other parents followed up with emails expressing the importance of the CBE CARES! work and their hopes that meaningful action will make the CBE stronger and more resilient, and will serve all students, staff, and the community.

The following concepts and themes summarize what was heard from parents and caregivers who participated in the listening sessions.

Systemic Issues

Several participants outlined the need for the school board to name racism and discrimination in its entirety and that the failure to do so has “resulted in the silence and complicity of teachers and staff in schools to ignore or dismiss incidents of race-based conflicts as isolated events.”

Addressing racism and discrimination requires bold leadership from the most senior levels of the organization. It requires an understanding that the issues are complex and that many school and area leaders do not know how to begin to address systemic problems. Participants emphasized that systemic issues of policy, practice, curriculum, stereotypes, and the many other layers that disproportionately impact students who are Indigenous, Black, and Persons of Colour must be a priority for the CBE. Each barrier must be dismantled and rebuilt with the engagement of the community that entrusts their children to the care of the school system.

The lack of diversity among teachers and school administrators, particularly within the CBE elementary schools is concerning. Some schools do not have any non-Caucasian teachers, vice-principals, or principals. People with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people are also underrepresented in teaching cohorts and administration. One parent shared this example:

My children stare at people in wheelchairs until I explain what is going on. Not only have I never seen a teacher in a wheelchair but the curriculum for kindergarten to grade 2 doesn’t talk about special needs people. I once read “Just like Me” to my children and was surprised that I personally had not introduced this topic to my children before.

Equitable hiring practices not only encourage and support diversity in the system but enable students to see themselves reflected in their teachers and those who touch their everyday at-school lives. Students who have role models are empowered to embrace differences, develop self-esteem, and are better positioned to consider their role in creating an environment where everyone feels wanted and accepted.

Parents and guardians stressed the importance of anti-racism training for teachers, staff, and students to build understanding, to listen, and to learn how to address challenging conversations and situations as well as to recognize one’s own biases. They further stressed the importance of accountability and consequences for racist and discriminatory behaviours. The roadblock outlined is not just lack of knowledge but the system overall. One participant described this as a “thickness of bureaucracy where someone like that is allowed to create an act of violence, create an act of supremacy over other people, and really have nothing happen to them.”

“The whole system needs to be scrutinized and overhauled...the curriculum, the policies, the clubs.”

The issue of accountability was further explained:

There are currently no adequate or standardized frameworks for accountability related to harm being caused in our classrooms and our schools that parents and children can access. It is wrong to suggest that we can create safe space. There is a need for more frameworks of accountability and language used by leadership to address racism.

One parent described her position on racism and accountability within the school system:

Being 'not a racist' does not exist. You're either racist or you're anti-racist. Do you stand when you see anything that looks like racism? If the answer is no, you're racist whether you like it or not, because you are a bystander or witness of something that by not saying anything you support.

Others described their shared experiences of overt racism in the school registration process. One parent recounted an incident where the intake staff did not believe that their child was fluent in English.

Others described the pain experienced by their children who were ignored and excluded by their peers based on the way they look or speak.

The stress and anxiety experienced by children is exacerbated when the injustices that racialized students and their families must contend with in society more broadly are reflected in the schools.

Inequity is particularly evident in the power imbalance between teachers, school administrators and students. A number of listening session participants cited examples where systemic racism impacted their children, including:

- Punishment was harsher for non-white students.
- Students who did not have advocates were subjected to discriminatory practices.
- Implicit biases held by teachers and administration favour non-IBPOC (Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour) students.
- Reporting incidents of discrimination and racism risk impacting a student's grades.
- School celebrations and festivities do not recognize the broad diversity of the student population (Ramadan, Kwanzaa, Diwali, Black History Month, National Indigenous Peoples Day); and in some cases, school celebrations are disrespectful to students.
- Subtle forms of racism. One example is when teachers "get the names of the three brown students in a class of 28 students mixed up."
- Discrimination from teachers directed at students, and parents not knowing where to turn for help.
- Lack of support from schools for children experiencing racism and discrimination.
- School councils that are predominantly white in schools that are highly diverse.
- A student reporting to parents that a teacher made racist remarks and mimicked "Chinese and Japanese people with weird accents, made fun of Black people and LGBTQ+ people."
- CBE mirrors societal discriminatory barriers. "Microaggressions like assuming everyone looks a certain race, or come from the exact same background, and that they're all homogeneous, or expecting them to speak to the experiences of their entire race. "

"I think we as citizens, teachers and principals all need stand up and say, 'This is not acceptable' when someone makes a racist behavior or a comment."

The School Environment

Parents and guardians outlined that in many ways schools are a reflection of society in that racism and discrimination manifest in prejudicial attitudes and behaviours. Listening session participants shared their own experiences with discrimination as a result of their skin colour, how they speak, and how they dress. Some shared their experiences as newcomers to the country, when they were subjected to abuse, discrimination, and exclusion. Indigenous parents and guardians spoke of experiencing ethnocultural inequality in how they and their children are treated in the school environment. Parents and guardians provided specific examples:

"I'm so tired of seeing my smart and educated daughter call me from school coming home in tears, almost on a weekly basis, because she has once again witnessed discrimination in her school because of the color of her skin."

- An Indigenous parent said *"The dismissal of students when they bring up things like racism, or homophobia or things like that, dismissal of them when they bring up bullying as well. And one of the biggest things that I noticed is that we still have schools here in Calgary named after Canadian heroes that were fathers of genocide."*

- Another parent observed that *"Black children are particularly likely to be more disciplined in school and studies have shown that they're more likely to be punished for infractions that a white child would not be punished for."*

- Inclusion and issues of learning disabilities came to the fore *"So I think about access to services for children with disabilities, whether it be from a mental health perspective, or a learning disability or physical disability, and how we make sure that we have equitable access across the system."*

- There was concern about white CBE teachers not creating a safe environment for Indigenous children *"I don't feel that my daughter is safe in a CBE school. I don't feel like she's safe. Not necessarily with the other students, but with the teaching staff...the teachers don't stop other students from calling them Indian, or other slurs when the teachers are standing right there."*

- The use of racial slurs was described by one parent as an *"unfortunate situation that my daughter experienced in junior high as well in grade 10. And this is just, you know, unfortunate situation where teachers felt they had the right to use the N word. And they didn't use it to, in a way, insult but as part of the conversation."*

- A parent of biracial children shared her experience *"There have been multiple instances on and off school grounds where white students have called them the N word in which there were zero consequences...and trying to provoke to their peers of colour with statements like all lives matter."*

- Evidence of racism in schools where *"some kids carved racist and homophobic slurs into one of the theater department doors with a knife. And the kids knew who did it, and they alerted the school, and the school became aware of it. And then a listening session was held where students of colour came and wept about how traumatizing it was for them."*

- *My eldest one is fine to tell everyone that she's Ukrainian. But she's not fine with saying that she's also Lebanese, she's not fine saying she's part Aboriginal. She's figured out what's acceptable in her environment with her peers.*

"I hate multicultural food day. It is like bringing a target to school and it is not fun. It is a form of tokenism."

“It's about curriculum, curriculum, curriculum. We need to dismantle it. Refusing to acknowledge the true history of this country perpetuates stereotypes and discrimination.”

The school environment is particularly challenging for students with disabilities. One parent explained:

I have a neurodiverse daughter, my oldest was just talking today about that they have blind students at school, but there's no Braille on any of the classroom doors or there's no Braille on any of the washrooms And so thinking in terms of both physical diversity and neuro diversity as well.

Parents and guardians also outlined that the school environment does not support transgender and gender diverse students.

My daughter identifies as pansexual. So, I'm looking at, where does all of this start and how important the school structure is for not just our kids, but for society.

LGBTQ students, and the inclusion of them and I think what's important here is being able to visually see yourself at school, right? So, whether that's because of the color of your skin or because of your lived experience, being able to see yourself on the walls, at school, in the different activities at school, those kinds of things.”

Increased support and resources for students with learning needs was emphasized.

I have a child who has learning disabilities. It wasn't until he was in grade eight that someone took me aside and told me that there were some supports available, but they were very limited. And I was shocked to know that in out of a school of 500 children that only three could be supported to get a proper psychological assessment.

Curriculum

Schools provide an environment where teachers and students can navigate and discuss the complexities of race, racism, discrimination, and inclusion. In order to build knowledge and change the status quo, participants outlined the problematic nature of the Eurocentric curriculum.

If these issues are to be tackled, one place to start is the curriculum which introduces history through colonial lens. One parent provided this example:

A basic example is the use of “To Kill a Mockingbird” or that the works of Shakespeare are not pre-empted with conversations around race. This occurs in the absence of any meaningful professional learning or development that addresses anti-racism, power, privilege, and oppression.

This was reinforced by other parents who said that the language in the curriculum and in some of the books that students were reading made them uncomfortable. Parents would like to see curriculum-related policies and programs that they can support at home.

“Rather than learning about definitions, I want my kids to come home and tell me about what they were taught to be anti-racist.”

Curriculum revitalization must stress the importance of learning about Indigenous and Black history. One participant cautioned that “if you don’t talk about it, you erase it.” Another elaborated that “what we are doing is to teach our children to be upstanders, no bystanders; the curriculum creates a safe space for them to do that.”

“The curriculum promotes racism. It doesn’t show positive images of Blacks...all they talk about is slavery, slavery, slavery.”

One parent, in acknowledging their privilege, stated, “We should really educate our kids on our First Nations history and the systemic barriers that they face. Black Lives Matter is not like all life matters. It is time to recognize that we are coming from a place of privilege as white people.”

Building on that statement, another parent said, “What I have a problem with is that the curriculum really glorifies white supremacy and colonization. I want to see more BIPOC content. As an Asian Canadian I have experienced racism. I know that it exists, and it affects the students.”

It is important for the curriculum to represent Indigenous people and for students to understand the realities and implications of living in a colonial society. One parent spoke about how “Indigenous people are represented in the curriculum about part of history, but they are not presented as part of our present.”

Data Collection

The importance of data was discussed in the context of understanding the demographics of staff and administration and based on that knowledge, reallocating resources, and reimagining how equity can be achieved across the system. Data serves to inform, identify gaps, and provides a basis for action in hiring and retaining staff and administration who mirror the community.

Qualitative data was also discussed as a way to understand the current environment from the perspective of students. By understanding how students view themselves, how they view others, and how the school environment impacts their self-esteem, a baseline of information can be developed. This can be used to measure progress through subsequent pulse-taking initiatives.

Parents and guardians expressed the need for incident reports from each school. These reports are important as the collection of accurate data about racist and discriminatory behaviour enables the CBE to collect and properly track incidents. A data collection tool would be accessible for anyone working or studying within the school system to report something that they observed or experienced. Educators and students should be able to report incidents without fear of repercussions.

Professional Development

Most participants appreciate the challenges that teachers face in addressing issues of racism and discrimination appropriately. Most also believe that the teachers want to help young people reach their potential and want to develop the skills to make the learning environment safe and welcoming for all students. One parent, who is also a teacher, explained that it is left up to individual teachers to embrace the work of “ensuring students are aware and engaged in understanding the experiences of Black Canadians, for example.” The point is that the history and contributions of Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour should be infused in the curriculum and amplified during times when groups are celebrated: February for Black History month; June for to recognize Indigenous Peoples as examples. This was put forth as the most basic and entry level way to address racism and equity in schools – by building awareness and celebrating the diverse mosaic of our city and country.

The importance of preparing teachers to facilitate challenging conversations was described by a parent who said, “Racial education and awareness for all students is so important. Racial sensitivity and awareness training that includes topics like and examples of white privilege, inclusion, the difference between equality and equity needs to be taught to teachers and staff at all schools.”

Parents and guardians recognized that teachers need training on how to handle difficult conversations, to recognize microaggressions, and to know how to handle any situation that arises in a competent way that ensures their safety and the safety of students.

Empowering Students

Creating an emotionally and physically comfortable and safe environment requires the engagement of students in both identifying and addressing the problems. Public discussions about racism and discrimination infuse almost every aspect of the discourse in the media, on social media, and increasingly in the classroom. Parents and guardians spoke about the importance of empowering children to think for themselves, to be responsible for their actions, to inquire, and to have the tools to deal with challenging and sometimes dangerous situations. One parent shared this:

Inquire, not only, into the information the world brings to them, also inquire into themselves - how and what they internalize and so believe about themselves, others, and the world at large - the skills to intentionally choose for themselves their values and worldview from the plethora of input they are bombarded with daily - foundational to personal accountability and caring for oneself and others.

When children are taught self-respect, they become compassionate people. One parent quoted the “Notorious RGB” (US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg) who said, “fight for the things you care about and do it in a way that will lead others to join you.” This parent went on to explain the intersection of teachers and students in addressing racism and discrimination in that every incident of discrimination is based in learned distrust and disdain, and so every incident is an opportunity for those with the power in the room and those with leadership skill at, any level, in the room to stand up and turn that incident into a teaching opportunity of trust, consideration, and respect.

“Scary! I know - down right terrifying! We adults can’t empower our future in the minds, hearts, and souls of our children until we inquire into our own fears, values, beliefs and world views.”

The Role of Parents

In contributing to the conversation, parents and guardians agreed that they have a critical role in building an environment that is inclusive and safe for everyone at the CBE. As educators are encouraged to make space for discussions that help students learn about racism and discrimination, those discussions need to be reinforced in the home environment.

Many parents are wrestling with how to help their children understand bias and discrimination, how to react when they are the target of words, actions, and microaggressions, and how to ensure that their children are not perpetrators of hurtful and harmful acts.

A white parent candidly affirmed that “my children, I would say fairly obviously have not experienced racism or discrimination in the public school system. They are all white...I myself and my children probably exist in quite a lovely bubble in Calgary, where racism and inequity are not part of our world.” Another elaborated on how he came to understand racism, “it’s something that is so deeply intertwined into society, especially when we have white

privilege and are directly benefiting from how our society is structured. We don't even notice." And yet another parent added to this conversation, by saying "I became colorblind by virtue of growing up in a very multicultural neighborhood, and just taking things for granted that, you know, everything was equal, everything was readily available, and I really was not aware of white privilege...I was really ignorant of, you know, the, the inequality that they, minority people of colour, experienced."

Personal agency of parents was reflected when one parent acknowledged "I've really become a student of racism and just making sure that making sure that I'm bettering myself and also helping every child and every human being have equal opportunity."

The responsibility of parents in addressing racism and discrimination was captured by one parent who stated:

I think that the teachers, at least from my experience, are doing a great job right now with inclusion and diversity. So, I don't think that it's fair to expect the teachers and the school board to bear the brunt of pounding this into our kids. I think that a lot of the responsibility should reside with us because we're the parents.

The general willingness of parents to learn was evident in the listening sessions. They spoke about how they should be discussing issues with their children and the kinds of people they want their children to become as adults.

Parents and guardians acknowledged that there is a lack of equitable IBPOC (Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour) representation in the CBE system and expressed that it is time to solve the issues and not spend any more time on talking and reports.

"It is so simple, if you want change have Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour leading the change."

Commitment to Action

Parents and guardians provided a number of specific, implementable ways to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- Name the problem and address racism and discrimination in a bold and transformative way.
- Review all policies and make changes that ensure all parents, guardians, and students are respected, safe, included and see themselves reflected in the CBE.
- Arrange monthly workshops for staff, teachers, administrators, and students on ethics and respectful interactions with others.
- Mandate anti-racism education for all CBE staff.
- Impose consequences for using racial slurs.
- Introduce a reporting and data collection tool for use by those observing or experiencing discrimination or racism.
- Collect qualitative data through the lens of students to understand the culture of their school and the system. Utilize this information as a baseline to measure future pulse-taking initiatives and progress (or lack of progress) in addressing racism and discrimination.
- Collect demographic data on the number of Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour in teaching, school administration, and all levels of the CBE. Use that data to make change in hiring and promotion practices.
- Incorporate a process to collect complaints and feedback anonymously.
- Create spaces where staff and students can engage in cultural and faith-based practices.
- Address the accommodation needs of all students.

"How can everyone be part of the conversation without feeling like the responsibility is placed on people of colour."

- Institute early release times in all schools to enable students to practice their faith without compromising their classes.
- Reflect community demographics in the CBE.
- Establish diversity teams built around the concept of Indigenous talking circles to address issues, build awareness, and find resolutions to incidents.
- Ensure that School Councils mirror the communities they serve.
- Create an anti-racism Task Force as a resource for students, parents, teachers, or staff to access if they have encountered racism and discrimination.
- Create anti-racist clubs in junior high and high schools so students can discuss what is happening in their schools and work with resource teachers.
- Allocate a social worker in every school to provide a safe resource for students.
- Revise the curriculum so that the history and contributions of all people are recognized.
- Continue to build the foundational knowledge of staff and students and go beyond the superficiality of land acknowledgements by teaching about the meaning and including this in the curriculum.
- Ensure that the CBE website and online resources reflect diversity, inclusion, and a safe and caring environment for all students.
- Incorporate accountability and consequences for racist and discriminatory behaviours and actions into policies.
- Continue the conversation – provide more opportunities for parents and educators to discuss issues in a safe environment.
- Host “open townhalls” in schools to engage in the tough conversations and to collectively find a way forward.

“Put a IBPOC team in place. People from all different backgrounds, abilities, and disabilities. They need to actually be at the top in those leadership positions. We need to hire and pay and, and actually put those people in positions of power.”

Voices of CBE Staff

The staff listening session was an unstructured, facilitated discussion that provided all participants an opportunity to share their personal experiences and observations. Breakout group members expressed that they work in a complex and emotionally demanding environment. Racialized participants explained that their jobs were made more challenging due to additional stressors arising from personal experiences of systemic and other forms of racism. Participants in the staff session explored systemic issues including hiring practices, curriculum, anti-racism education, and culturally responsive pedagogy. They also discussed the impact on the self esteem and mental health both students and staff who experience racial slurs, stereotyping, and microaggressions.

The following concepts and themes summarize what was heard from CBE staff who participated in the listening session.



What experiences, perspectives, and insights can you share about racism, discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion within CBE?

What specific, concrete actions can CBE implement to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

Systemic Issues

Some described the CBE as a white, male, conservative, and Christian organization that has a history of not addressing racism and discrimination in a courageous and direct manner. Staff participants provided examples of situations that should not have been allowed, which should have been shut down immediately, and where complainants have been accused of “playing the victim”. One participant observed that “at the CBE, you are judged differently if you are Caucasian and have an accent than if you are a person of colour with an accent”.

An LGBTQ+ educator shared a disturbing pattern of discrimination and microaggressions:

As part of the LGBTQ community, I have, unfortunately heard often very sexist, and discriminatory language towards staff and towards students. And I believe that there's a lot of microaggressions that need to be addressed...in this field around students, LGBTQ students and what their lived experiences are of high school. The microaggressions are daily things like misgendering students, calling them by the wrong pronouns and then following up with 'he, she, whatever, doesn't matter'.

Other examples were shared including: colleagues stating that *those kids* are always late; *those parents* are probably uneducated so cannot help their children; and racialized students addressed by teachers and administrators “like they do not speak English or do not understand math. An alarming number of instances were described by staff that evidence the discrimination and racism that racialized students face on a daily basis. In cases where altercations involved white students, they were given preferential treatment whereas non-white students were treated harshly. Staff recounted their colleagues making fun of non-white students’ hair or the way they looked or dressed. Comments were shared with fellow teachers, and sometimes directly to the student. In one case where a student was the target

of racism by peers, that student was “made to sit with the offenders in a room and sign a contract to learn how to be nice to one another; she was told to swallow her experience and I was told to stop making a big deal about things. Though I called it racism, no one else would.”

Racialized staff described being told by colleagues: to go back to their country; that their colleagues would only shop in certain locations where people were not dirty and disorganized; that cultural food is smelly, oily, and disgusting;

“As a white educator I sometimes feel like I am walking on eggshells. We need a common language around anti-racism as we are not experts.”

being asked if they were going to wear that “weird thingy” (a sari). Often these comments are prefaced with “I know this sounds racist, but...”

“If we want to break the cycle, we will take serious and immediate action because every day that passes the same dehumanizing cycles of oppression are happening.”

Participants observed that discrimination is widespread in the CBE and that racialized students are particularly vulnerable to the inequitable educational and social conditions that exist in society, and which are reflected in the school environment. Two staff members explained:

I have observed and continued to watch how students, families, and staff members have been dehumanized and targeted by microaggressions and overt examples of racism and discrimination. For example, I've seen how Black students in particular have been regular targets of racism within the CBE.

An altercation had broken out in a hallway near my classroom, a Black student was being ridiculed for the size of her lips. A staff member intervened, excused the offending students to go home, and the Black girl was accused of picking a fight. She was told to quiet down or it would result in a suspension for her.

Examples of systemic discrimination included black male students being called gangsters for their braids and being told that “they had learned their aggressive behaviors from Africa”, baptized Indian students being told to hide their knives, and other students being regularly shamed or perceived as a threat for wearing their religious symbols.

A staff member recounted a situation where students attempting to form a gay-straight alliance were told that they were “not to be painting rainbows around the school because we wouldn’t want to look like a gay school.” Another observed instances where students’ names are anglicized or changed to make it easier for teachers to pronounce and how being called by a different name impacts students “because it is more white-passing in a way which internalizes racism against themselves and is being fostered in staff.”

Students who are new to Canada have encountered racism and discrimination from some staff and administration. Staff echoed experiences that were shared in the parent and guardian listening sessions where newcomers and their children have experienced disrespect by school authority figures, and the impact of discrimination on their rights in the school system. One staff participant provided this explanation:

When new students have been enrolled, and I've asked where they've attended school previously, staff members have joked that they're probably fresh off the boat. I am stunned by some of these moments. Other colleagues do look at me sympathetically, but they make no attempt to intervene and stand as an ally. I've also heard from staff that they're frustrated with refugees, not because of the lack of resources but because they don't know how to wash or shower. They've also directly told me that they cannot find people attractive because of their dress and the way they saw their parents. Students and families have also been regularly recommended for at home learning.

IBPOC staff are having to advocate for IBPOC students and feel that the system looks to them to make everyone feel visible, heard, valued, and cared about. The systemic inequities were illuminated by one participant who stated “I am the one that is hurt by these situations, so why do I have to make excuses for another’s behaviour. I am told to ‘suck it up’, but what is the plan for their behaviour?”

“We need to look at the whole system – administration, teachers, principals, students, and parents.”

“Teachers are not equipped or comfortable to bring world issues into the classroom. We have the knowledge and awareness to deal with LGBTQ+ jokes but do not have the same ability or language to deal with racism.”

Professional Development

Teachers outlined the importance of cultural inclusion in the curriculum as this is the essence of Canada – a country that is comprised of people who have emigrated from all over the world over the many generations since European contact with Indigenous peoples.

This requires changes in curriculum and in the tools provided to educators. One participant stressed that schools and teachers “need a specific, everyday classroom instructional strategy for school-wide approaches.” The emphasis was on a combination of awareness building and practical action. A teacher elucidated this point.

Conflating multiculturalism with culturally responsive teaching – mistaking multiculturalism for culturally responsive teaching – these are two different things. Maps of different countries or culture days where people cook and bring in the food, are all really great things. However, culturally responsive teaching is tapping into the culture of the students, where they come from, and using what they students know in terms of their culture, to have them succeed in their academics.

Staff stressed that resources must be allocated to their professional development. Too often, racialized teachers and students are called upon to be the voice of a particular group of people whom they are deemed to represent. In explaining the importance of teacher

education one participant stated:

It's not the job of students or teachers of color to be given the given the burden of responsibility to educate others on racism or their culture. As an educator, I think that we need to recognize a variety of cultures in our own school and that as teachers, we need to educate ourselves, and not just rely on the students to tell us what they feel.

“I am so exhausted having to explain. The first reaction is defensiveness and that it is a personal attack. It is exhausting to be a person of colour and having to bring it up again and again.”

Creating an Inclusive Environment

Staff discussed the importance of institutional learning and cultural sensitivity as foundational to building an organizational culture where employees, students, and families can thrive. Noting an example of how direction from the uppermost levels can set the ethos of an organization, and perhaps unintentionally undermine principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, a participant observed that:

Cultural sensitivity awareness should be more than just food. The board sent out an email to parents - an order to celebrate Black History Month. They were going to play music and serve jerk chicken and southern fried chicken. So, from my perspective, I was slightly offended by that, but then to try and begin to understand the purposeful planning that went into that and whether or not that was the perfect way to celebrate Black History Month.

There exists a significant disconnect between how schools celebrate cultures and how people are made to feel welcome.

“An inclusive environment is one that is a welcoming, safe, and respectful learning environment for all of our students.”

The dangers of stereotyping - the idea that everyone within a certain group share the same characteristics, was discussed. One pervasive specific example was provided by a teacher:

I hear so often all of these students are kind of grouped together, like all these students are always late, like those kids are, those parents are probably uneducated, those parents probably can't help them with their homework.

Another shared that “I’ve observed colleagues use the ‘N’ word against others and with students. I know teachers have used the word and written it in their classrooms on their whiteboard.” Yet another explained that when students whose first language is not English are told that schools are to be “English only”, those students feel excluded.

These examples illustrate the importance of anti-racism education for all CBE leadership and staff. The discussion focused on a system-wide acknowledgement that there is an issue within the organization, that biases are both implicit and explicit, and that a strategy is required to address inequities directly and dealing with the root causes. Educators talked about their lack of tools and knowledge to first challenge their own biases and those of their colleagues. Anti-racist education will help teachers to develop a common language and to build a “toolbox” that they can draw upon. One teacher elaborated on why training is foundational to creating an inclusive environment:

I think the training part and the educational piece are very important people don't want to step out of their comfort zone. So, it's easier for them just put a label on somebody now. But the reality is that they don't have that understanding of each other. So, I think it's very important for us to educate people about the cultural differences, and sensitivity, right, so we all have a common ground before you put any judgment of anybody else.

Staff felt that creating an inclusive environment starts with foundational principles of openness and transparency must be embraced and communicated by the Board of Trustees. The culture of the organization is grounded in Board leadership and an unequivocal statement that is not open for interpretation and which states that “CBE does not discriminate and does not accept discrimination.”

Parents have a role to play in ensuring that the CBE environment is safe for everyone. Teachers cited examples of parents directing racial slurs and threats at them. Students and teachers have experienced unsafe situations where they have been referred to as terrorists, or Covid-related slurs directed at East Asian individuals. Staff called for the CBE to take the lead in clearly communicating to parents and their children that there is zero tolerance for racism and discrimination and to clearly outline consequences.

It is not uncommon for students to complain about a teacher’s accent and to use this as an excuse not to listen or to complain about the efficacy of the instruction they are receiving. Teachers experiencing this type of discrimination explained that they do not feel supported by principals. One teacher stated “sometimes you have to walk in another’s shoes. If we want to make a change, it starts with administration as they make or break a school.”

“It is our duty to do better and be better for the families who entrust the students to us. We have the power to open or close doors of opportunity. We are accountable for how we use the privilege we are afforded.”

“It is not enough to be aware; we need action. Educators want to see palpable action beyond these dialogues.”

Resources

Listening session participants took the opportunity to talk about the need to examine the kinds of resources required to support inclusion, equity, and diversity. They spoke about hiring practices, sources of information for parents and students, and allocation of resources to areas of need.

Discriminatory hiring practices came up as educators shared their personal stories.

I know what it feels like to be discriminated against or to have a racial slur thrown my way, or to do everything I know is possibly right; and still after a doctoral degree and checking all the boxes I'm told by the CBE every year that I'm not what they're looking for. I watch people who have less than I do, who've done less make it...and I'm still trying to justify my worth and value.

I have been passed over for advancement numerous times despite having superior academic credentials and experience. Whether it racism, sexism, or ageism, it is all discrimination.

The demographic profile of the community, when reflected in the CBE organization, demonstrates the commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This requires that the hiring process be reexamined. As two teachers put it:

Working with lots of new Canadians, I still remember being in a gym and looking around and seeing all of these beautiful faces, but then looking back and wondering where they are represented on the teaching staff...and having the entire teaching staff be well meaning white folks that don't get it and can't support the students in some ways.

I don't know how, 20 years after I graduated, I can look at the school and see the same thing as when I attended. We need to have some really hard conversations about how we privilege certain people over others in our staffing and decision making. It is time for principals, assistant principals, and the system to support staff. To demonstrate that we do not accept racism and marginalization. While we are fighting racism, we are also contributing to it.”

Staff also stressed the importance of resources that consider the linguistic requirements of parents whose first language is not English. Establishing an easy way for parents and students to access materials would help families navigate a complex system. The information should also include guidance on what families can do if issues of racism and discrimination arise.

Resources also need to be allocated to help underrepresented students in a way that meets their unique needs and accessibility requirements. As one staff participant said, “this is about helping our administrators, and helping our leaders understand what would be a loving way to respond, what would be a way to support and provide resources.” Another suggestion was providing staff with suggestions for resource materials that serve to enhance their learning journey. A number of participants recommended book and periodicals, with one educator offering:

One of the most recent books that I read was ‘How to be an Anti-Racist’ and that it was just so thought provoking. So, I recommended that book to some of my staff and they came back, and we had a rich conversation around it. You know, we didn't think that some of our thoughts could potentially be racist. The Indigenous Education Team has a fabulous resource center, and we could potentially look at in our system to build some repository to access some of these resources for CBE staff.

Commitment to Action

CBE staff provided a number of specific, implementable ways to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion:

“We don’t all experience racism the same way. The experience of a Black person and an Indigenous person are completely different, so the answers are different.”

- Acknowledge that racism and discrimination are systemic issues in the CBE.
- Clearly and unequivocally communicate that racism and discrimination in any form will not be tolerated whether it is perpetrated by staff, students, parents, or guardians; that individuals will be held accountable for racist and discriminatory behaviours, actions, and words; and that these will be result in consequences.
- Overhaul the curriculum because “Our curriculum and the resources we use are riddled with racist and discriminatory messages that reinforce assimilation. These resources do need to be removed from shelves or used in a way that students and staff analyze them through critically conscious lens.”
- Provide educators with the training, personal development, knowledge, language, and tools to ensure they are prepared to effectively discuss and address issues of racism and discrimination.
- Provide parents and students with resources.
- Create a hotline to report incidents.
- Review and revise hiring and promotion practices to ensure that the people in the CBE mirror the community.
- Focus cultural celebrations on building knowledge and elevating the voices and accomplishments of Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour. Consult with communities and students before planning “cultural days”.
- Develop a way to share resources recommended by teachers, parents, and students. Several teachers shared resources that they felt were powerful tools to help educators build their own knowledge of racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Empower students and elevate their voices. A teacher explained that “when we are talking about race in schools, the biggest thing I want to say to anyone is I feel like we need to make sure we're keeping in mind how we can empower students, because sometimes if we go through their dark histories without thinking about the empowerment piece can be really, really upset. And I think it's important for us to really, you know, empower them as well let them know that they have the ability to speak and the ability to do something or give them something to do.”

“In all these years I have never heard any negative feedback about racism in the schools. I guess I need to listen and learn. This is a surprise.”

Voices of the CBE Advisory Council

Comprised of 42 people representing a cross-section of CBE students and employees, the CBE Advisory Council met four times between November 2020 and February 2021. The work of the Council was primarily addressed in small breakout groups which provided the opportunity for all voices to be heard. Each meeting included six small group breakout groups facilitated by a discussion leader who was selected from the Council.

The Advisory Council's work focused on:

- Issues and barriers that impede everyone at the CBE from enjoying an inclusive and supportive environment.
- How racism, discrimination, exclusion, and inequity manifest in the work and study environment.
- Wise practices from within, or external to, the CBE that could be incorporated in action plans.
- Ways that the CBE is currently working to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Effective ways to change attitudes by addressing indifference, passivism, and lack of knowledge.
- How students can be empowered, their voices elevated, and have a sense of inclusion and belonging.
- Constructive ways to address those who engage in racist and discriminatory behaviours.
- How classrooms and workplaces can be more inclusive.
- How teacher professional development can contribute to building skills and cultural competence capacity.

At its final meeting, the Advisory Council focused on specific, concrete actions that could be implemented to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion; and the role of CBE schools, teachers, parents, guardians, and students in implementing actions.

The following concepts and themes summarize what was heard from the Advisory Council.

The diversity of the student population is generally not reflected in the ethnic make-up of teaching staff. This is an issue for IBPOC teachers as they are looked to as the face of CBE diversity; and it is an issue for non-IBPOC teachers as most have not been trained, or are not comfortable, addressing issues. One educator elaborated:

Our inexperience are things that we are lacking. We don't know everything, and especially the different cultures that are represented. And I think as a teacher, when we used to look at a curriculum, a lot of it looked at Western culture and North Americans. Rarely, but in some cases, we did reach out and we looked at different cultures in social studies.



What issues, barriers, or concerns prevent students, teachers, and staff from enjoying an inclusive and supportive experience in the current environment?

Council members wondered how a truly collaborative environment can be achieved when the system does not reflect all members of the community. In discussing the relationship between diversity and inclusion, one educator said that “diversity cannot occur without first having inclusion.” In further exploring this point, there was agreement that without first creating inclusive environments and safe spaces for everyone, it is not possible to achieve true diversity. The importance of acknowledging peoples’ experiences is central to an inclusive and supportive environment. This means taking the time to understand and allow for people to speak to their experience, the feelings that they have at work, and their experience at work. This requires that the CBE “do a pulse check” on the school and work environment.

Issues of equity in the CBE system were discussed as being fundamental to why diversity initiatives are needed. Equity considerations relate to curriculum, to structural systems, to historical marginalization of people, and to long-held societal beliefs and social norms.

The Council brought forward a number of issues that present roadblocks to inclusion and equity in the places where they work and study, including:

- Discomfort and hesitancy of those in authority to address racial incidents.
- White fragility – concern about the “feelings of the white people involved rather than the feelings of the people who were hurt.”
- Failure to take the time to get to know people and to know their names.
- Not considering the whole person – where we come from, our perspectives, our feelings, our cultural beliefs, and values.
- A Eurocentric curriculum that does not include the perspective of Indigenous people, Black people, and students who have come from all over the world.
- The naming of places and spaces. As one Council member explained:

How does an Indigenous student feel walking in the door to the building named after the man who committed genocide against your people? You're going into a school named for the man who started residential schools.

- Lack of role models; the staff population does not mirror the student population.
- School resource officers disproportionately target Black and Indigenous students.
- Lack of information and support for students. One teacher explained:

Some students try and teach their peers about something that's oppressive to them, and because they themselves are trying to reconcile that as teenagers, they do not have all of the words and language to sort of convince their peers.

- Assumptions that teachers and administrators make about students and their families if their first language is not English.
- Frustrations experienced by both parents and the schools due to language barriers.
- Racial narratives, intentional or unintentional, based in a lack of understanding.
- Lack of understanding of privilege. One Council member summarized:

As a white person, it's been a journey for me to recognize my privilege and understand that even though I don't know it, I've benefited from a system. And the first step that I absolutely had to do was acknowledge that because it's not enough to just say, "Well, I'm not racist," and to be a white person saying, "I'm the least racist person in the room". No one can say that.



How do issues that limit or prevent inclusion and equity manifest in the CBE environment where you work or study?

“Our curriculum is written from the perspective of colonizers. It does not include enough of other knowledge systems.”

Racism has many manifestations. It can be overt, subtle, an action, or a word. Sometimes it is a belief system that one group is superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs, or microaggressions. And sometimes it is embedded in systems and policies. However, racism manifests, it was agreed by most Council members that it is a persistent reality in society and is reflected in the CBE.

Some examples that were discussed by the Council include:

- Microaggressions that on the surface seem benign. As one participant explained “ask yourself why Rebecca and Jamie who are both blonde women are not confused for each other.”
- Implicit biases – the attitudes towards people or stereotypes that are associated with groups, sometimes without conscious knowledge. One example was comments or assumptions about parents by teachers like “do we need to get a translator”.
- Asking students to only speak English on the playground.
- Mispronouncing people's names consistently and “othering” – defining certain individuals or groups as not fitting within the social norms and often characterized as “they are not like me, or they are not one of us.”
- Policies that do not consider Indigenous ways of knowing or being.
- The silencing of questions that challenge a hegemonic space from an Indigenous perspective.
- The reallocation of funds intended for Indigenous education to other initiatives.
- Hurtful and discriminatory words. One participant described the continuous use of phrases like “the natives are restless” being used continuously in workspaces.
- Systemic racism that causes people to not speak out for fear that they may be jeopardizing their own careers and reputations.
- Lack of diversity in authors of texts that are used in the curriculum.
- Narrowing the lens by focusing on one aspect of history like residential schools or slavery.
- Direct and targeted racist comments between students that label certain cultures as bad or good. One teacher observed that “there is a lot of racism or comments, either directly or indirectly towards visible minority groups.”
- Aversive racism – the persistent avoidance of interaction with other racial and ethnic groups. One educator observed “Students of the same colour are hanging out together; it kind of shows that people are not really engaging with students from different backgrounds. And this is another way that I see the racism happening within the school system.”
- Cultural insensitivity by students and staff based on assumptions of an individual's intellect based on how they look or speak.
- One educator expressed that “you also have a group of Caucasian families that also feel very targeted, isolated, and feel like there's racism towards them, as well.”



How does racism manifest in the CBE environment where you work or study?

“You can tell when things are deliberate. I've heard many, many racial comments, and part of the issue is the belief that maybe you'll lose your job if you say something. So for quite a while, actually for a long while, I never said anything about it.”

The Council outlined a number of initiatives that demonstrate the commitment of the CBE to address issues of racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Some examples included:

What I see working better than anything else is the intrinsic motivation of individual professionals in our board who have taken it upon themselves to do self-learning often on their own time or often through higher learning specifically chosen to look at this Indigenous education, race issues within their learning.

CBE agreeing to listen our voices makes me feel really good and proud that we have some passionate people who care about equity, who care about diversity and inclusion and all of those pieces that the CBE Cares really looking at from a diverse and system thoroughly, I think is really important and key. And it makes me hopeful, and it makes me happy that there's so many people that wanted to be involved.

The introduction of the new TQS and LQS standards for educators and specifically standard number five related to Indigenous histories and ways of knowing, being incorporated into educator's knowledge. I've seen that have an impact and make a difference in school communities. I've seen specific professional development sessions that have had an impact, resources, safe communities.

I have many opportunities for that additional learning because there are funds available for me to do so. And I choose things that are relevant to my situation depending on where I'm working that year, but those opportunities exist for anyone in my position and other positions.

A lot of incredible PD that's going on with the experts.

The CBE three-year plan includes an Indigenous strategy. It's very clearly laid out, what our vision is, and what the strategies and actions are going to be and with measurable goals.

I could tell you that our SRO was absolutely fantastic. He built those relationships through trust and being very present in our building and connecting with the families where that partnership was actually invaluable.

The social studies curriculum is quite good; there are opportunities to talk about our nationalism and globalization and what it means to different cultures and what has happened in our society.

The conversations that transpire in the classroom. I was talking to our social studies teacher, and in their classroom, were talking about privilege and being able to sort of bring up some of the topics that we talked about in our first meeting and having those conversations with our students. And I think our social studies curriculum is really good.

The clear identification of the range and types of data that will support an understanding and a surfacing of areas of inequity and specific patterns of severe gaps in achievement.

I think the CBE is doing really well in using non-profit agency resources and tools to help students' success.



What is currently working within CBE to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

The Council agreed that all voices and perspectives must be heard and meaningfully engaged. A few that were mentioned included:

- Students
- Communities
- Parents and families
- Marginalized peoples
- Indigenous communities
- Educators and school staff
- Newcomers to the country and city
- Those who hold divergent and contrary views
- Students with unique physiological and psychological needs
- Not for profit organizations who work in the area of anti-racism



What are the different perspectives and voices required to inform how to address issues of racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

“And so, while yes, we can bring all of these voices to the table, in what ways can we ensure that they're actually used and followed through or not dismissed or valued.”

When racism and discrimination doesn't impact a group or individual directly, it is easy to underestimate the depth of the issues and the deleterious impacts, not only on those to whom words and actions are directed, but to all of society.

Throughout its work, the Advisory Council discussed the many ways that racism and discrimination are deeply imbedded in societal systems, hierarchies, power dynamics, and beliefs. Whether through a lack of knowing, lack of caring, or an unwillingness or inability to act, apathy and denial are insidious contributors to an unsafe and unwelcoming environment.

The Council explored ways that the CBE might work to change this, including:

Using storytelling. Hearing people's life stories and their experiences from both sides, people of color, and from white people. Because there's such a spectrum. It's not do not just say, yeah, I'm a person of color, but I have no idea what it is to be an actual visible person of color, I have no idea what it is to be Black, in Calgary or in Alberta. So, I feel like storytelling might be a way to start.

Speaking up against racism - if you don't speak it builds up, builds up, and then again it boom is something bad happened, right? But if you speak up, if you experience discomfort, little by little bit, and you talk about it, and then and then you have a tool.

Confronting so as to question, our own biases and assumptions, personal biases that lead us to those strong beliefs that why do I think that my opinion is really better than yours, or the other people, right? So, we need to educate ourselves about those things.



What are the most effective ways for CBE to change attitudes and address indifference, passivism, or lack of knowledge?

Teachers on the Advisory Council provided a number of suggestions on how their professional development could be enhanced to provide an increased level of comfort and competency, including:

- Creating platforms and safe spaces to talk about racism and discrimination.
- Inviting people from the community, and their colleagues, to tell their stories and to speak about their culture.
- Focusing teacher training on building capacity and competency to have uncomfortable discussions in the classroom and with colleagues.
- Professional learning that helps teachers focus the curriculum through a multidisciplinary and multicultural lens.
- Understanding the demographics of the communities which the schools are areas serve.
- Understanding the cultural needs of students, their families, and colleagues.
- Engage with colleagues to create opportunities for professional development focused on building understanding and cultural competency.



How can teachers build cultural competency and be prepared to talk fluently about racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

One of the most empowering ways to hear the voices of students is simply to listen to them. Students sometimes feel that important issues get overlooked because those in power do not have the time to listen or do not want to listen.

When different perspectives are considered, and when people have the courage to engage in difficult and courageous conversations, these behaviours become a model for others on how to discuss differing views in a respectful and constructive way. One Council member explained that:

We model two people with two different views having a discussion and genuinely disagreeing. I do this often with one of my colleagues, we have extremely different views. And we still can be friends, we can disagree on a very challenging topic and we can still be friends.

It was pointed out that teachers and students have an opportunity to listen and learn from each other.

We each have our own fingerprints, and we each have different unique strengths. And we have to carry this knowledge and experience from our own culture that we can share and learn from each other and grow and grow with it.

One of the most powerful tools that can be provided to students is a curriculum that includes anti-racism and anti-discrimination education. Students need to see a healthy and inclusive society modelled in what they are learning.

Students who are the targets of racism and discrimination need to see the offending individuals be accountable for their actions. Restorative justice approaches might be appropriate in some cases as these provide the opportunity to talk about the impact of hurtful and harmful words and actions.

Some Council members talked about counselling students on how to deal with situations by providing them with the language and approach to deal with situations in a safe and empowering way.



How can students be empowered to speak out about their issues and experiences? What tools do students need to address insensitive, racist, or sexist situations?

Participants stressed the importance of creating a safe environment for students and staff to have conversations about what they are experiencing at school. In creating a sense of community, students will feel that they belong, that they matter, and that they are valued. A teacher explained the value of hearing the voice of students:

Tapping into the experiential knowledge of students will be helpful. Speaking to, and asking, students about their own personal experience. I don't know how to have that happen. I'm not a teacher, an expert in that area...so we should leverage those things, to help students feel more included and feel that their experiences are valued.

Staff discussed how they are working within their colleagues to create safe and welcoming environments for students. They spoke about how their professional learning has contributed to finding ways to have conversations with students in order to develop trusting relationships so that students are comfortable coming to them with issues about race, gender, mental health, or abuse.

A teacher spoke about the need for students to have the right tools to engage in conversations about societal issues in the school, the community, and the world. Another teacher affirmed the need to be “models of what we say as “it's very difficult for kids to walk outside of the buildings and see the world operate on under different circumstances or contexts or rules.”

One staff member spoke about progress that is being made, the need for an increased system-wide focus, in providing scholarships for LGBTQ+ and IBPOC grade 12 students.

Advisory Council participants discussed authentic leadership in teaching:

Authentic presentation of cultures, not an interpretation that is whitewashed. If you throw in that authenticity, you'll get a lot more buy in from the kids who are ready, even from some staff who are ready, because I don't want to hear what we [white people] have to say about Indigenous people. I wanted the Indigenous people to come talk to my department about residential schools and how bad they were so that we could actually learn from it.

Authenticity in teaching extends to understanding how curriculum content can represent a system of oppression. Knowledgeable educators are also equipped to discuss contemporary issues. One student expressed why this is important in stating that “so that when we get to science class and talk about pipelines, we can talk about the oppression behind the pipeline going through Indigenous land.”

Participants also discussed creating a culture of mentorship at the CBE

We can create those cultures and clubs within the school system. A Canadian born student can be a mentor to a new immigrant who is new to school. This may lead to the different level of friendship, right?



What are some ways that CBE can promote and support more inclusive classrooms and workplaces?



What supports do vulnerable staff and students need?

A participant called for bringing in perspective and diverse voices through literature from kindergarten through grade twelve. Storytelling creates conversations and is a medium for dialogue about inclusive schools and classrooms. One teacher said, “we are really trying to structure all aspects of our curriculum through powerful stories.”

There was a call for strong, rigorous, and consistent learning opportunities for all staff that is reinforced by the CBE vision and connected to the three-year education plan as a foundational piece to supporting an inclusive learning environment.

Creating inclusive classrooms and workspaces is supported by ongoing learning sessions with employees. The content for staff educational workshops can be formulated through surveys that ask students and staff what they would like to see included in these sessions.

Another participant called for further learning as individuals and as a collective when he said:

My job is to be a lot more aware of the, of the white privilege that I've had up until this time and acknowledge it, and then actively be an anti-racist. So, I'm educating myself, and now that I've kind of gotten to that mindset, and I understand I'm still learning. It is a huge process.

CBE Human Resources was called upon to focus on diversity in hiring practices. It is important for everyone at the CBE to see and interact with people who are representative of the Canadian mosaic of cultures. Participants elaborated on how hiring supports inclusive workspaces and classrooms:

I love that we have leadership, women leadership, Indigenous leadership, leading it, which I think is just so powerful, that sends a really strong message.

This really builds a foundation of diverse voices. That definitely starts at the core of what we can do in terms of bringing on more people who understand the foundation of what we need to build in education, which is inclusion, diversity, equity, racial justice, and antiracism. These need to be first and foremost. And that starts with who you hire.

Change starts with meaningful, deliberate, and courageous conversations, however uncomfortable. A teacher called for resources to help students and colleagues create a culture of character citizenship.

When safe spaces for discussions are created, vulnerable students can come together to talk and share with others. Safe spaces are incubators for building allyship.

However, learning must extend to all staff and students to build understanding and directly address discrimination. One participant said, “once we have more of that, we build allies, and I think we will feel a societal shift.” The power of training was emphasized by a Council member who stated, “usually people behave badly because they don’t understand something.”



What school level and classroom level changes are needed in order to make anti-racism, anti-bullying, and anti-every-other-form-of-discrimination a part of student vocabulary, attitude, behaviours, and beliefs?

Advisory Council members spoke of the burden placed on IBPOC staff who are constantly expected to educate others about race, diversity, and oppression.

Broad awareness of issues not only builds allyship, but expands the number of people who are delivering the message, educating others, and challenging societal norms.

When you ask multiple people and find out how many people know what equity is, most people don't. I think we need to maybe get some messaging out there. And let people know that you know, racism or outing people are, you know, all of these sorts of things. homophobia, it's not acceptable.

The idea of having diversity champions was discussed as a way to provide sustainable supports. Schools and workplaces need more than one champion because “if there are two or three people that are working as champions and one were to leave, there are others to carry on the work.” Champions are people who believe in, and fight for, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and school environment. These people find avenues for action to occur in ways that benefit all involved. Champions are people in the school or workplace who know students and staff, who engage them in the conversation, who act as an information resource, and who collaborate with vulnerable people on all aspects of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

The Advisory Council suggested ways to address situations where colleagues are engaging in racist and / or discriminatory behaviours:

- Create safe spaces for conversations because “even the perpetrators need to feel safe in order for any meaningful conversation to start.”
- Engage experts and researchers who have studied and understand racism and discrimination to help develop ways to address challenging situations.
- Educate people on why what they said or did was hurtful.
- Train teachers and administrators “education is probably the most powerful tool we have in our toolbox.”
- Educate all in the CBE system about the historical and cultural concepts of privilege and power dynamics.
- Include reconciliation in the progressive discipline process.
- Implement restorative justice processes in schools and workplaces.
- Examine the Code of Ethics, revise it if required, then clearly communicate the consequences of code violations.

The Council had several suggestions to address this question including:

- Establish dedicated diversity and inclusion teams.
- Build a foundation of diverse voices by revising hiring practices.
- Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of the CBE.
- Continue the process of engaging all voices: parents, guardians, students, and staff in identifying issues and developing solutions.



What supports do vulnerable staff and students need?



Are there unique and constructive ways to address students, teachers, and staff who engage in racist and discriminatory behaviours?

What tools can CBE provide to enable teachers to handle situations where colleagues or students are being culturally insensitive, sexist, or racist?



How can CBE get the entire organization on board with diversity and inclusion initiatives?

The Advisory Council was asked about measures that can be taken within the CBE to address racism, inclusion, and equity in a bold and meaningful way.

Boldness starts at the top. The Board of Trustees and senior administration are called upon to establish and communicate what the CBE values. However, words are just the beginning. When leaders analyze and reflect on their own biases and their own discriminatory actions, whether or not they're intentional, overt, covert, or, frankly, uninformed, or unaware, they model the way for others.

Examine the visuals. This means reviewing places and spaces for ways that these perpetuate an inhospitable and uncomfortable environment. Rename those that venerate perpetrators of racism and discrimination and teach the accurate history behind the names.

Enhance spaces. Represent various cultures through art and imagery in schools and workplaces.

Re-evaluate, renew, or remove the School Resource Officer program. Rather than fostering partnerships with the schools and communities as was the original intent of this program, SROs disproportionately target IBPOC students.

Collect, analyze, and use data. Understand the demographic composition of the CBE school and area staff in relation to the communities served. Utilize this data to review hiring and promotion practices and make meaningful change in mirroring the student population. Require progress reports from each school and area.

Understand and address intersectional discrimination. Collaborate with students, families, and communities on intersectional anti-discrimination issues and actions.

Amplify student voices. Meet with students, listen to them, and put their ideas into action.

Accommodate anonymity. Provide a safe way for anyone in the CBE system to bring racist and discriminatory issues forward.

Provide professional development for all staff. Ensure that that all staff engage in personal learning and are prepared to counter racism and discrimination and able to engage in challenging conversations in the classroom and with peers. Include anti-racism and anti-discrimination training into conferences and learning gatherings.

Celebrate appropriately. Eliminate celebrations that make some people uncomfortable. Rather celebrate and give voice to Black History Month, Women's History Month, Pride Month, National Indigenous Peoples' Day, Métis Week, and other times of recognition.

Address mental health. Provide a platform to normalize conversations about the impacts of racism and discrimination on well being.

Develop strategies and action plans. Continue to listen and engage everyone in the conversation and in the development of measures that will truly make a difference. Develop and implement consistent, deliberate plans focused on racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all schools.



How can racism, inclusion, and equity be meaningfully and boldly addresses in CBE schools and workplaces? What wise practices and approaches could be incorporated in CBE?

“We talk about the LGBTQ+ community as separate. That group is marginalized, often twice or more in the larger context of society...that is intersectional discrimination.”

Voices of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers

Members of the CBE Indigenous Education Team met individually with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers from January - March 2021 to discuss racism and discrimination within CBE schools and workplaces. Eleven (11) First Nation and Métis Elders and Knowledge Keepers generously lent their wisdom and advice to inform the CBE CARES! initiative. The following concepts and themes summarize what was heard from Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers who participated in the listening sessions.

Addressing Racism, Inclusion, and Equity

“Each person is responsible for doing personal work when it comes to racism. Approach this with an open heart, ready to learn and understand.”

Breaking the cycle of racism starts with a focus on learning and unlearning. The residential schools, the last of which closed in the mid-1990s, undermined the basic tenets of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Colonial legislation codified racism and discrimination and imposed systems that to this day disadvantage Indigenous peoples. These historical and present-day realities cannot be ignored and are the basis of intergenerational trauma. One Elder said, “the truth of the problem is right there in front of us, and it makes everything uncomfortable” and went on to add that the answers and the strategies are “there as well and just need to be implemented.”

The unlearning starts with trust, examining the similarities between all human beings, and understanding that when someone causes harm to another because of the colour of their skin or their belief system, it is a reflection of something within the perpetrator that needs to be healed. An Elder explained:

In traditional Indigenous customs there is no such thing as differences between races because we use the example of our shadow. Everyone’s shadow is the same colour. This teaching comes from the land. This teaching tries to help my children understand.

The issues within CBE are a reflection of what is happening in the community, therefore addressing racism, inclusion, and equity requires a collaborative effort. Indigenous students, and all students, should feel culturally and physically safe in their communities and in their schools. This requires “putting aside titles and hierarchies and coming together with a common language and understanding about racism.”

CBE has policies and procedures that provide written guidance, but effective implementation requires that administrators and educators have the knowledge and confidence to handle challenging situations. One Elder advised “Don’t fall apart when the community approaches you to talk about and deal with racism; come from a place of knowledge and expertise.”



How can racism, inclusion, and equity be meaningfully and boldly addressed in CBE schools and workplaces?

“We cannot fall into the same mistakes. We need to do the right thing.”

The Elders and Knowledge Keepers offered advice on how to meaningfully and boldly address racism, inclusion, and equity in CBE schools and workplaces:

- Validate the policies. Ensure all administrators and staff know how to support and implement policies and practices in their day-to-day work.
- Speak about policies from the heart to help people to understand and connect with them.
- Promote a willingness to listen, use stories if possible. Provide anti-racism education for all students through cultural awareness and storytelling. Include families in the training.
- Partner with the City of Calgary, corporations, and agencies to align and strengthen anti-racism work.

Wise Practices

“Kids watch everything and see everything. Teacher behaviour and attitude teaches kids too...not just the lessons.”

Western structures place boards and senior administration at the top of a leadership pyramid. When the structure is inverted, communication is maximized and the voices of students, staff, and the community are amplified. As one Elder explained “We need to look at the hierarchy that is in place, the leaders at the top and the community is at the bottom, we need to flip the hierarchy and have the community at the top.” This proposed model engages parents and caregivers collaboratively with schools to address systemic issues and find solutions that ultimately benefit everyone. It was pointed out that “systemic racism is when you make plans for Indigenous students without Indigenous people at the table.”

On addressing racism, and following the passed motion by CBE Board of Trustees to rename Langevin School to Riverside School, an Elder observed, “Three Caucasian students stood up to change the Langevin School name. They showed that Indigenous students are still feeling the impact of Langevin and his acts. We need to support these students.”

An Elder offered that, “Teachers and staff need to know that they are doing a good job. In Calgary we have multiple cultures in classrooms so teachers need supports and support staff to help meet the diverse needs of kids.” Supports can include engaging Elders in the classroom as well as with individuals or groups of students. Stories, culture, and ceremony encourage everyone to speak from the heart and can be used to teach values like kindness to address racism. In making the linkage between school and home, an Elder observed that “The most important conversations happen at the kitchen table. We need to think carefully about what lessons and stories we want students to go home with; they will share these stories at home.”

Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers provided a number of suggestions to address issues and barriers.

- Start by looking at the history of colonization.
- In order to work together safely, it is important to understand the linkage between discrimination and trauma.
- Bring Indigenous scholars into the strategic planning and decision-making process.
- Deal with every incident of racism immediately.
- Engage trained peacekeepers and moderators to help people work through confrontation.
- Bring in Elders from different cultures to teach traditions and protocols and to hold talking / resolution circles.



What wise practices are you aware of that CBE could incorporate to address issues and barriers?

Supports for Vulnerable Staff and Students

Those who are the targets of racism and discrimination must be heard. A number of Elders and Knowledge Keepers talked about the impact on people when they feel invisible and the importance of creating safe spaces for students and staff to voice their concerns, to share their experiences, and know that someone is listening to them.

Everyone experiences racism differently. Listen to the people that experience racism and learn from their experiences. Students might not have a place to talk about how they experience racism. Listen and ask how we can help. Give kindness and love.

An Elder suggested one tool in building understanding of how the past impacts the present is the Kairos Blanket Exercise. This was suggested as a way to understand colonization and trauma, and used extensively in schools across the country, the exercise is a participatory experience that educates and builds empathy. The Blanket Exercise is conducted by trained facilitators and is typically followed by a talking circle guided by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers. Another Elder cautioned against the use of the exercise.



What supports do vulnerable staff and students need?

“It’s important to increase and give children self-confidence to deal with times of uncertainty.”

Teachers, students, parents, and caregivers all require the tools to deal with racism and discrimination. Teachers need to have the language to address situations immediately. Students need to be empowered to stand up for themselves and for others and to “call out staff who are not conducting themselves properly.” Parents and caregivers need to know where they turn to when situations arise and have the confidence that meaningful action will result.

Large class sizes and the need to balance teaching with interpersonal issues places a significant responsibility on teachers to provide the kind of supports required to address the needs of all students. The Elders stressed the importance of teacher health and well-being and generously offered to come into classrooms to better understanding what students are experiencing and to offer their support to teachers. Comments that supported this critical issue included:

There are sometimes 35-40 students in a class. It’s too hard to work with that many; can’t build the relationships needed to teach these hard lessons.

Teachers feel that they follow the students home, they carry that in their heart.

In school we need to focus on the human element, whole beings, not just the cognitive.

“Racism can lead to suicide. Everyone needs to have someone to talk to who knows how to support them.”

The Elders and Knowledge Keepers stressed the importance of providing cultural supports for all students, staff, and families through the teaching and understanding of protocols and traditional knowledge.

Potential Next Steps for Consideration by the CBE

The potential next steps offered in this section represent a compendium of what was heard from parents and caregivers, students, Elders, staff, and the Advisory Council. These are presented for consideration and analysis by CBE to inform strategies and action plans as the organization moves to determine next steps.

“This is not the work of IBPOC; it is the work of everyone. But people need the tools. To do this work you need to walk on the eggshells, to break them, then do the work.”

Staff

An inclusive framework that addresses systemic issues starts strong public statements from the Board of Trustees and the Chief Superintendent.

Name it. Publicly announce that the voices of students, parents, guardians, staff, and Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers have been heard; acknowledge that racism and discrimination are real barriers to an inclusive and equitable environment.

Commit to action. Publicly share new initiatives specifically designed to address racism and discrimination. Be open and transparent about the fundamental principles and values of the CBE, that these are non-negotiable, and that racism and discrimination will not be tolerated.

Overarching Principles

- State unequivocally and clearly that racism and discrimination in any form will not be tolerated whether it is perpetrated by staff, students, parents, or guardians; that individuals will be held accountable for racist and discriminatory behaviours, actions, and words; and that these will be result in consequences.
 - Adopt and implement the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, focusing specifically on education for reconciliation.
- Develop strategies and action plans. Develop and implement consistent, deliberate plans focused on racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all schools.
 - Allocate budget to anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives.
 - Continue the process of engaging all voices: parents, guardians, students, staff, and community in identifying issues and developing solutions.
 - Engage all CBE Service Units in conversations and action plans focused on dismantling inequities.

1. Communication

- a. Develop consistent definitions of racism, discrimination, equity, inclusion, bias, and other terms that teachers, administrators, and employees can use as they build their own knowledge and communicate with others.
- b. Accommodate anonymity. Provide a safe way for anyone in the CBE system to bring racist and discriminatory issues forward.
- c. Recognize the variety of languages in the school by including even a few words or a greeting in announcements.
- d. Continue to standardize the use of Indigenous land acknowledgements in all schools. Continue to go beyond the words and teach about the meaning of land acknowledgements.
- e. Encourage teachers and administrators to share their pronouns with students.
- f. Instill a culture of respect by requiring teachers to model the way in properly pronouncing students' names.

2. Curriculum

- a. Identity and Self Esteem. Infuse Indigenous and Black knowledge and lived experiences in the curriculum. This provides a means for students to appreciate their identity and enhance self-esteem while building awareness of all students and teachers.
- b. Decolonize History. Decolonize the curriculum by seeking, learning, sharing, and affirming the unique histories and contributions of Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour. This requires recognition that the dominant narratives in curricula are based in Eurocentric knowledge systems and interpretations of history.
- c. Racism and Discrimination. Overhaul the curriculum to identify and address resources that promote racist and discriminatory messages that reinforce assimilation. Remove these resources or utilize them in a way that students and staff analyze them through a critically conscious lens.
- d. Classroom Resources. Integrate books by authors who reflect the diversity of the classroom, the city, and the world.
- e. Preface teaching of history or classic readings with discussions that address power, privilege, and oppression.
- f. Invite people from the community to tell their stories and to speak about their culture and experiences.
- g. Include anti-racism and anti-discrimination education in the curriculum. Utilize the curriculum to model a healthy and inclusive society.
- h. Develop courses focused on race relations, racial justice, and discrimination.

"I think the solutions are all very interconnected."

Student

3. Data Collection and Usage

- a. Collect demographic data on the number of IBPOC, LGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities in teaching, school administration, and all levels of the CBE. Use that data to make change in hiring and promotion practices.
- b. Develop a data collection methodology, online or a hotline, that enables anyone working or studying in the CBE system to anonymously report incidents they have observed or experienced.
- c. Mandate the reporting of incidents of racism and discrimination in schools and workplaces. Collect and analyze data. Require progress reports from each school and area.
- d. Collect qualitative data to understand the culture of schools and areas. Conduct regular pulse taking surveys with samples of the school and workplace population to understand the environment, to measure progress, and to use in developing action plans to address racism and discrimination.
- e. Link demographic data with student achievement on Diploma Exams and Provincial Assessment Tests (PATs), post-secondary destination, school engagement, and well-being.
- f. Utilize data to inform, identify gaps, and provide a basis for action in hiring and retaining staff and administration who reflect the diversity of the community.
- g. Utilize quantitative and qualitative data as a baseline and measure progress regularly.

4. Discussion Forums

- a. Normalize the language of racism and discrimination. Discussing social norms that underpin privilege and which contribute to and perpetuate racism and discrimination is a strategy to build awareness and address issues.
- b. Provide opportunities for students, teachers, staff, and parents who have experienced racism and discrimination can engage in restorative, safe, and confidential conversations.
- c. Create anti-racist clubs in junior high and high schools so students can discuss what is happening in their schools and work with resource teachers.
- d. Create equity and diversity councils that are open to any student, in every school. Councils would organize events, invite guest speakers, hold discussion groups, and encourage all students to join.
- e. Establish equity and diversity teams built around the concept of Indigenous talking circles to address issues, build awareness, and find resolutions to incidents.
- f. Understand and address intersectional discrimination. Collaborate with students, families, and communities on intersectional anti-discrimination.
- g. Address mental health. Provide a platform to normalize conversations about the impacts of racism and discrimination on well being.
- h. Accommodate the linguistic needs of students and their families.
- i. Encourage schools to engage in the tough conversations and to collectively find a way forward.

5. Hiring and Promotion

- a. Increase the number of educators and educational administrators who are IBPOC, LGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities.
- b. Practice intentional recruiting and hiring. Focus new hires and promotions on placing IBPOC, LGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities in positions at all levels in the CBE.
- c. Develop talent pipelines. Create a guide or program that outlines how the CBE develops talent, particularly from the IBPOC, LGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities community.
- d. Develop anti-racism specialist roles and recruit IBPOC, LGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities experts and professionals to support schools and administration and who work with the community; model the initiative on the Indigenous Education Team.
- e. Ensure that Human Resource roles include IBPOC, LGBTQ+, and persons with disabilities.

6. Places and Spaces

- a. Rename places and spaces that commemorate historical figures with documented legacies of racism and discrimination.
- b. Enhance spaces. Represent various cultures through art and imagery in schools and workplaces. Display flags in schools that represent the diversity of students, so that everyone feels seen and respected.
- c. Ensure that all school and workplaces accommodate students with special accessibility requirements.
- d. Examine the visuals. This means reviewing places and spaces for ways that these perpetuate an inhospitable and uncomfortable environment. Rename those that venerate perpetrators of racism and discrimination and teach the accurate history behind the names.
- e. Create spaces where staff and students can engage in cultural and faith-based practices.

7. Policies

- a. Review all policies and the Code of Ethics and through the lens of racism, discrimination, equity, and diversity and address gaps.
- b. Establish clear guidelines on unacceptable behaviour, language, and actions. Incorporate accountability and consequences for racist and discriminatory behaviours and actions into policies. Where appropriate, utilize restorative justice approaches.
- c. Institute early release times in all schools to enable students to practice their faith without compromising their classes.
- d. Ensure that School Councils mirror the communities they serve.
- e. Eliminate discriminatory codes that are used in the school system. Examples are Code 650 that identifies a student as a refugee and Code 303 which identifies a student as foreign born.

- f. Develop multiple successful outcomes for high school completion that provide options for student success and next steps in their lives. These might include certificates of completion and apprenticeships.

8. Recognition and Celebrations

- a. Understand the mosaic of cultures and traditions represented by students and staff in respectful and responsible ways. Consult with communities and students before planning “cultural days”.
- b. Eliminate celebrations that make some people uncomfortable.
- c. Focus cultural celebrations on building knowledge and elevating the voices and accomplishments of Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour. Introduce cultural appreciation days where students, parents, and teachers share their culture, and learn about each other’s history, traditions, and values.
- d. Rather celebrate and give voice to Black History Month, Women’s History Month, Pride Month, National Indigenous Peoples’ Day, Métis Week, and other times of recognition.
- e. Recognize holidays from all religions.

9. Resources

- a. Develop a mentorship or buddy system, in every school, that matches students who are new to a school with another student. Mentorship helps new students navigate the environment, build relationships, feel welcomed, and develops leadership skills in the student mentors.
- b. Create easily accessed resources to help students and their families who are new to Calgary to navigate the CBE system when dealing with issues of racism and discrimination.
- c. Develop materials and information that parents can use to dismantle racism in discussions with their children.
- d. Develop a way to share resources recommended by teachers, parents, and students that are focused on building knowledge of racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- e. Re-evaluate, renew, or remove the Calgary Police Service School Resource Officer program. Rather than fostering partnerships with the schools and communities as was the original intent of this program, SROs disproportionately target IBPOC students.
- f. Create an anti-racism Task Force as a resource for students, parents, teachers, or staff to access if they have encountered racism and discrimination.
- g. Establish teams of diversity champions in every school and workplace. Champions know students and staff, engage them in the conversation, act as an information resource, and collaborate on all aspects of diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- h. Allocate a social worker to every school to provide a safe resource for students.
- i. Ensure that the CBE website and online resources reflect diversity, inclusion, and a safe and caring environment for all students.

- j. Increase the focus on scholarships that enable IBPOC and LGBTQ+ students to continue their education after grade twelve.

10. Training and Development

- a. Provide professional development for all staff. Ensure that that all staff engage in personal learning and are prepared to counter racism and discrimination and able to engage in challenging conversations in the classroom and with peers. Include anti-racism and anti-discrimination training into conferences and learning gatherings.
- b. Provide professional learning that helps teachers focus the curriculum through a multidisciplinary and multicultural lens.
- c. Arrange monthly workshops for staff, teachers, administrators, and students on ethics and respectful interactions with others.
- d. Provide cultural competency training for school psychologists to provide them with the skills to work collaboratively to meet the diverse needs of students and families.

“These are complex and challenging issues, but concrete actions must be taken.”

Resources Suggested by Participants

These resources have been suggested by session participants and have not been reviewed, investigated, or validated by the author of the Report or endorsed by CBE.

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Appendices

Advisory Council Meetings

Advisory Council Meeting #1 – November 9, 2020

Purpose	The inaugural meeting of the CBE Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports Advisory Council focuses on sharing information, ideas, and suggestions for promoting equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in the CBE schools and workplaces.
Process	Three questions for discussion in breakout groups; sharing as a group. Additional question for discussion in a whole group format.
Outcome	Exploration of current realities related to inclusion, equity, and racism. Sharing of ideas on how to take bold and meaningful action. Preparing the Advisory Council to continue discussions on the four questions with the groups they represent to inform discussions at the next meeting of the Advisory Council.

Breakout Group Discussion Questions:

1. What issues, barriers, or concerns prevent students, teachers, and staff from enjoying an inclusive and supportive experience in the current environment?
2. How does racism manifest in the CBE environment where you work or study?
3. How do issues that limit or prevent inclusion and equity manifest in the CBE environment where you work or study?

Whole Group Discussion Question:

4. How can racism, inclusion, and equity be meaningfully and boldly addressed in the CBE schools and workplaces?

Advisory Council Meeting #2 – December 3, 2020

Purpose	The second meeting of the CBE Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports Advisory Council builds on the first meeting.
Process	Four questions for discussion in breakout groups; sharing as a group. Additional question for discussion in a whole group format.
Outcome	Developing a deeper collective understanding through sharing of broad perspectives, knowledge, and observations.

Breakout Group Discussion Questions:

1. What resonated with you from the summary of November 9th. Was anything missed at our first meeting?
2. What wise practices and approaches to address issues and barriers are you aware of that could be incorporated in the CBE?
3. What is currently working within the CBE to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?
4. What are the different perspectives and voices required to inform how to address issues of racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

Whole Group Discussion Question:

5. What is NOT working within the CBE to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?

Advisory Council Meeting #3 – January 21, 2021

Purpose	The third meeting of the CBE Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports Advisory Council builds on the Meetings #1 and #2.
Process	The focus for Meetings #3 and #4 is on action plans.
Outcome	Exploring meaningful, implementable ways for the CBE to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Breakout Group Discussion Questions:

1. What are the most effective ways for the CBE to change attitudes by addressing indifference, passivism, or lack of knowledge?
2. How can teachers be prepared to talk fluently about racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?
3. How can students be empowered to speak out about issues and experiences?
4. How can schools encourage cross-cultural student interactions?
5. What are some ways that the CBE can promote and support more inclusive classrooms and workplaces?
6. How can teacher professional development be enhanced to build skills and cultural competence capacity?
7. What school level and classroom level changes are needed in order to make anti-racism, anti-bullying, and anti-every-other-form-of-discrimination a part of student vocabulary, attitude, behaviours, and beliefs?
8. How can the CBE ensure that students feel a sense of inclusion, belonging, and equity on a daily basis?
9. How can the CBE get the entire organization on board with diversity and inclusion initiatives?
10. What supports do vulnerable staff and students need?
11. What tools can the CBE provide to enable teachers to handle situations where colleagues or students are being culturally insensitive, sexist, or racist?
12. How can students be provided with the tools and language to address situations that are insensitive, sexist, or racist?
13. Are there unique and constructive ways to address students/teacher/staff who engage in racist and discriminatory behaviours.

Advisory Council Meeting #4 – February 25, 2021

Purpose	The fourth meeting of the CBE Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports Advisory Council builds on the Meetings #1, #2, and #3 as well as the Parent and Guardian Listening Sessions.
Process	The focus is on adding to the conversation and recommending action plans.
Outcome	Exploring next steps in building meaningful, implementable ways for the CBE to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Breakout Group Discussion Questions:

1. What specific, concrete actions can the CBE implement to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion?
2. What is the role of the CBE, the role of schools, the role of teachers, the role of parents/guardians, and the role of students in implementing these actions?

Parents and Guardians Listening Sessions

Communiqué from Christopher Usih to Parents and Guardians – January 11, 2021

Dear parents and guardians,

Last year, we introduced CBE CARES (Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports) to advance equity, anti-racism, and inclusion at the Calgary Board of Education. Every student and staff member should have the opportunity to succeed personally and academically regardless of background, identity, or personal circumstances.

Now we would like to hear from you. We are hosting three online listening sessions to engage parents and guardians in open discussions about racism, discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion. These listening sessions provide a safe space for you to share your experiences, help us understand the current environment at the CBE, and help shape our next steps. We are hosting these sessions online to hear from many perspectives and adhere to COVID-19 guidelines.

If you are interested in participating in one of the online listening sessions, please complete this form by Sunday, Jan 17.

The sessions will take place on Jan. 28, Feb. 4, and Feb. 18 from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. Each session will have a maximum of 100 participants who will be split into smaller groups to allow for deeper discussion. If more than 100 parents express an interest for each session, a draw will be held to determine participants from across our schools and areas.

Dr. Marie Delorme is supporting me in the important work of CBE CARES and will be facilitating these listening sessions. She is well respected in leadership and organization, and her research focuses on inter-cultural leadership.

Written Submissions

Parents, students, and staff can also share your experiences and suggestions by emailing cbecares@cbe.ab.ca by Feb. 22. Comments submitted by the deadline will be considered by Dr. Delorme as she develops her recommendations for the CBE. We will not be responding individually to each submission.

Next Steps

Through these listening sessions and written submissions, as well as learnings gathered through a literature review and our Advisory Council, we hope to gain the insights we need to inform meaningful next steps. Based on all the

feedback and advice gathered, Dr. Delorme will report back to me with recommendations for moving forward with CBE CARES by the end of March 2021. As an organization we will then consider actions arising from the report to enhance equity, achievement, and well-being for all.

Throughout this process, we continue to listen with open hearts and open minds, and to work with our communities to foster inclusive work and learning environments. Thank you for your interest and support as we boldly take action to advance equity, anti-racism, and inclusion at the CBE.

Christopher Usih
Chief Superintendent of Schools

Communiqué from Dr. Marie Delorme to Parents and Guardians – January 2021

Thank you for your interest in participating in a CBE CARES! (Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports) listening session. We received responses from hundreds of parents and guardians.

I am pleased to inform you that your expression of interest was randomly selected to participate in the session on _____ from 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. The session will be held via Zoom. Please use the following link: _____

The attached Agenda will provide you with additional information. Please note that discussions will take place in facilitated breakout sessions of 25 people. As each participant will be allotted 3 minutes to speak in the first round of discussions, you may find it helpful to prepare your comments in advance.

If you find that you cannot participate in this listening session, please send an email to cbecares@cbe.ab.ca as soon as possible.

Your strong interest in CBE CARES! is greatly appreciated.

Thank you once again,

Dr. Marie Delorme
CBE CARES! Lead Facilitator

Agenda for 2021 Parents and Guardians Listening Sessions, January 28, February 4, February 18

1. Welcome – Chief Superintendent Christopher Usih

The CBE CARES! (Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports) listening sessions are designed to engage parents and guardians in open discussions about the current environment in the CBE. The listening sessions provide a safe space to hear experiences, perspectives, and insights about racism, discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through these listening sessions the CBE is hoping to gain insights into tangible takeaways that can inform meaningful next steps.

2. Process – introduced by Dr. Marie Delorme

Principles to Guide Breakout Discussions

- All voices are valid and valued.
- Share while making space for other voices.
- Be as specific as possible without using names.
- Tell other's stories only with their permission.
- Do not share other's stories outside of the session without permission.
- Offer suggestions for ways to make meaningful change.

Note that each participant will have 3 minutes to speak in the first round. Please be succinct.

The session is being taped for reporting purposes but no participant will be identified or linked to any specific comment in the report. Recordings will be deleted after the final report is delivered to the CBE in March.

Ways for participants to engage

- Tell your story and provide recommendations for the CBE actions.
- Use the chat function to add comments.
- Send an email to cbecares@cbe.ab.ca after the session.

3. Breakout Groups – Facilitated by Dr. Kojo Otoo, Dr. Marlon Simmons, Mr. Colby Delorme, Dr. Marie Delorme

Twenty-five participants will be in each breakout group discussion. As each participant will have 3 minutes to speak in the first round, it would be helpful to have your comments prepared in advance. Remaining time in the breakout group will be allocated to those parents and guardians who may have additional comments.

If participants wish to share more information please direct comments via email to cbecares@cbe.ab.ca

CBE Staff Listening Sessions

Communiqué from Dr. Marie Delorme to CBE Staff – January 2021

Subject: You are invited: Staff Listening Session for CBE CARES! – for response by January 22

Last week, Chief Superintendent Usih sent a message to all staff about next steps on CBE CARES! (Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports). The message highlighted that a staff listening session was being planned. My name is Dr. Marie Delorme. I am external to CBE and am working with Chief Usih and the CBE on this important initiative.

Your name has been randomly selected to participate in the staff listening session, which is being held on Monday, February 22, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

This invitation has been sent to 100 of the many CBE staff members who applied for the Advisory Council last year but who were not selected.

I will be facilitating this listening session with members of my team and the University of Calgary. The session is intended to engage staff in open discussions about racism, discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion at the CBE. It will provide a safe space for you to share your experiences, help us understand the current environment at the CBE, and help shape our next steps. This session will be held online to adhere to COVID-19 guidelines. There will be a maximum of 100 online participants who will be split into smaller groups to allow for deeper discussion.

Please respond to this invitation by accessing this link by January 22

If you respond that you will be attending, you will receive a follow up email with the link to the Zoom session and additional instructions.

The CBE appreciates your strong interest in supporting equity, anti-racism and inclusion for staff, students, and families.

Thank you,
Dr. Marie Delorme
CBE CARES! Lead Facilitator

Communiqué from Dr. Marie Delorme to CBE Staff – February 2021

Subject: Your CBE CARES! Staff Listening Session Details for February 22, 2021

Thank you for confirming your participation in the CBE CARES! (Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports) Staff Listening Session.

The session will be held on February 22nd from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. Please use the following link:

The attached Agenda will provide you with additional information. Please note that discussions will take place in facilitated breakout sessions. As each participant will be allotted 3 minutes to speak in the first round of discussions, you may find it helpful to prepare your comments in advance.

If you find that you cannot participate in this listening session, please send an email to cbecares@cbe.ab.ca as soon as possible.

Your strong interest in CBE CARES! is greatly appreciated.

Thank you once again,

Dr. Marie Delorme
CBE CARES! Lead Facilitator

Agenda for 2021 CBE Staff Listening Session February 22, 2021

1. Welcome – Chief Superintendent Christopher Usih

This CBE CARES! (Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports) listening session is designed to engage staff in open discussions about the current environment in CBE. The listening session provides a safe space to hear experiences, perspectives, and insights about racism, discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through this listening session CBE is hoping to gain insights into tangible takeaways that can inform meaningful next steps.

2. Process – introduced by Dr. Marie Delorme

Principles to Guide Breakout Discussions

- All voices are valid and valued.
- Share while making space for other voices.
- Be as specific as possible without using names.
- Tell other's stories only with their permission.
- Do not share other's stories outside of the session without permission.
- Offer suggestions for ways to make meaningful change.

Note that each participant will have 3 minutes to speak in the first round. Please be succinct.

The session is being taped for reporting purposes but no participant will be identified or linked to any specific comment in the report. Recordings will be deleted after the final report is delivered to CBE in March.

Ways for participants to engage

- Tell your story and provide recommendations for CBE actions.
- Use the chat function to add comments.
- Send an email to cbecares@cbe.ab.ca after the session.

3. Breakout Groups – Facilitated by Dr. Kojo Otoo, Dr. Marlon Simmons, Mr. Colby Delorme, Dr. Marie Delorme

Twenty-five participants will be in each breakout group discussion. As each participant will have 3 minutes to speak in the first round, it would be helpful to have your comments prepared in advance. Remaining time in the breakout group will be allocated to those parents and guardians who may have additional comments.

If participants wish to share more information please direct comments via email to cbecares@cbe.ab.ca

Advisory Council

Members

Christopher Usih, Chief Superintendent of Schools, Chair
 Abigail Omamogho, Nose Creek School (Area 3)
 Alex Hanson-Dobson, Elboya School (Area 7)
 Amrun Rana, Human Resources Representative, HR
 Andrea Bailey, Teacher/Learning Leader, Crossing Park School
 Annie Yu, Assistant Principal, Central Memorial High School
 Barbra Horsefall, Diversity and Learning Support Advisor, Indigenous Education
 Bob Cocking, President, Alberta Teacher Association Local 38
 Claudette Goudreau, Assistant Principal, Patrick Airlie School
 Courtney Walcott, Teacher, Western Canada High School
 Dija Al-Rekabi, Diversity and Learning Support Advisor, School Improvement
 Fahri Duman, Language Interpreter
 Ijaz Akbar, Facility Operator, Area 2, Facilities and Environmental Services
 James Hill, School Technology Support Specialist, Finance and Technology Services
 Jan Mahoney, Administrative Secretary, Christine Meikle School
 Jasmine Wu, Dr. E. P. Scarlett High School (Area 6)
 Julie Hrdlicka, Trustee, Wards 11 & 13
 Keith Johnson, Principal, James Fowler High School

Kennedy Alexson, Discovering Choices II Marlborough (Area 1)
 Kenny Yeung, Principal, Keeler School
 Malynda Kouperman, Staff Lead, Student Advisory Council
 Marilyn Dennis, Trustee, Wards 5 & 10
 Maya Lansdown, Administrative Secretary, Mountain Park School
 Michelle Finley, Specialist, Indigenous Education
 Moe Rachid, ELL Strategist, School Improvement
 Nora Hajar, Teacher, Central Memorial High School
 Prem Randhawa, Education Director, Area 1 & ELL/Welcome Centre
 Rae-Ann Royal, Chair, Staff Association
 Raheema Maherali, Senior Human Resources Advisor, HR
 Rasheed Abdullahi, Crossing Park School (Area 4)
 Ray Atallah, Director, Corporate Financial Services, Finance and Technology Services
 Sandra Merzib, Speech Language Pathologist, School Improvement
 Shiroji McDonald, Teacher, Royal Oak School
 Siraaj Shah, Diefenbaker High School (Area 2)
 Tammy Earl, Behaviour Support Worker, Thorncliffe School
 Trinity Asio Okiring Amuge, Joane Cardinal-Schubert High School (Area 5)
 Troy Killiam, President, CUPE Local 40

Superintendents' Team

Brad Grundy, Superintendent, Finance/Technology Services, Chief Financial Officer
 Dany Breton, Superintendent, Facilities and Environmental Services
 Darlene Unruh, Acting Superintendent of School Improvement, Areas 1,2,3,4
 Joanne Pitman, Superintendent of School Improvement, Areas 5, 6, 7 and Research and Strategy
 Kelly Ann Fenney, General Counsel
 Marla Martin-Esposito, Chief Communications Officer
 Rob Armstrong, Superintendent, Human Resources

Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers

Edmee Comstock, Métis
 Hal Eagletail, Tsuut'ina Nation
 Henry Holloway, Stoney Nakoda Nation
 Kerrie Moore, Cree/Métis
 Leonard Bastien, Piikani Nation
 Lottie Manywounds, Tsuut'ina Nation
 Marion Lerat, Kahkewistahaw Nation
 Miiksika'am Clarence Wolfleg Sr., Siksika Nation
 Reg Crowshoe, Piikani Nation
 Rose Crowshoe, Piikani Nation
 Saa'kokoto Randy Bottle, Kainai Nation

University of Calgary Academic Partners

Dr. Dianne Gereluk, Dean, Werklund School of Education
 Dr. Marlon Simmons, Associate Professor, Werklund School of Education
 Dr. Kojo B. Otoo, Werklund School of Education

Advisory Council and Listening Session Facilitators

CBE Advisory Council Discussion Facilitators

Andrea Bailey
Annie Yu
Barbra Horsefall
Claudette Gourdeau
Courtney Walcott
Dijla Al-Rekabi
Keith Johnson
Kenny Yeung
Malynda Kouperman
Moe Rachid Sirraaj Shah
Prem Randhawa
Raheema Maherali

Parents, Caregivers, and Staff Listening Session Discussion Facilitators

Colby Delorme, The Imagination Group
Dr. Kojo B. Otoo, University of Calgary
Dr. Marlon Simmons, University of Calgary
Dr. Marie Delorme, The Imagination Group

Elders and Knowledge Keepers Listening Session Facilitators

Dianne Roulson, CBE
Lori Pritchard, CBE
Michelle Finley, CBE
Michelle Ranger, CBE
Sarah Meade, CBE
Shane Cunningham, CBE
Stephanie Anastasiadis, CBE

Technical Support for Advisory Council Discussions and Parents, Caregivers, and Staff Listening Sessions

Tannis Dueck
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Literature Review



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY | WERKLUND SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Anti-Racism and Equity in the Calgary Board of Education: A Literature Review

Prepared by:

Kojo B. Otoo, PhD and Marlon Simmons, PhD

Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

April 2021

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Abstract

This literature review informs suggestions and advice on strategies to address racism, equity, inclusion, and discrimination in the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) schools and workplaces.

This literature review was shaped by contributions from the advisory council and listening sessions that allowed for voices of all participants (parents, staff, students, and community partners) to share their lived experiences with racism, equity and inclusion at the CBE. This report seeks to contribute towards policies, programs, and workable practices that will address anti-racism, engagement, and equity within the CBE.

Keywords: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Discrimination, Antiracism, Voices from the community

Acknowledgements

Much gratitude to Christopher Usih, Chief Superintendent of schools of the Calgary Board of Education (CBE), and the entire CBE team, to Dr. Marie Delorme of the Imagination Group and her entire group for their contribution and valuable insight into this literature review. Your constructive feedback and suggestions made this work more robust and informative. To all the students, staff, trustees and parents/caregivers of the CBE family, a big thank you for your stories, experiences, perspectives, and time. Your contribution to this work is invaluable and very much appreciated. On behalf of the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary, the research team of Dr. Marlon Simmons and Dr. Kojo B. Otoo would like to thank the CBE for the opportunity to foster a relationship of sharing, learning and exchanging knowledge on antiracism, equity, and inclusion within the CBE community.

The purpose of this literature review was to explore literature related to anti-racism, inclusion and equity in school jurisdictions across Canada and around the world to ensure that Calgary Board of Education (CBE) is informed of current and emerging issues that are relevant to their local context. The information gathered will help shape strategies to advance anti-racism, equity and inclusion within the CBE. The CBE Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports (CBE CARES!) was formed in June 2020 to advance equity, anti-racism and inclusion within the CBE. The goal is to give every student the opportunity to succeed personally and academically regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances. The overall mandate of the advisory council is to offer suggestions and advice on strategies to address racism and discrimination in CBE schools and workplaces. It is made up of representatives including students, staff and trustees, who participated in discussions on emerging issues related to equity, anti-racism and inclusion within CBE and its school communities and work sites. There were additional listening sessions for parents and staff to share their lived experiences with racism, equity and inclusion at the CBE. The advisory council meetings and listening sessions helped us understand the current environment at CBE. The input was instrumental in putting together this literature review with a view of enhancing equity, achievement and well-being for all.

Method

Searching for the literature were driven by two distinct moments of current research in the areas of racism, discrimination, equity, diversity and inclusion as well as the dialogue and sessions from the advisory council and listening sessions of staff/parents of the CBE community.

Reviewing the literature

Searching the literature involved drawing on works of eminent scholars of the Indigenous, black, queer, French immersion, learning disability, and gender traditions of scholarship. A conscious

effort was made to situate the literature within the context of racism, discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Canadian education system. Materials pertaining to these topics presented a critical synthesis of empirical literature and topics, as well as justification on how this literature review identified and addressed gaps by outlining a theoretical/ conceptual framework that guided this paper (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Dissertations, theses, peer-reviewed journals articles, governmental reports/documents, book chapters among others were included in this work. Efforts were made to include as much Canadian literature as possible. Relevant literature from across the world was incorporated in this work. The systematic literature search was drawn from established and authoritative databases such as the University of Calgary Library, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ERIC, and Google Scholar among others.

In reviewing the literature, a critical thinking approach was employed to continuously seek “out information that lies beyond our commonsense ideas about the world” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 2) in which we operate. During the advisory council meetings of the CBE and the listening sessions with parents/guardians/caregivers we began by searching and review extant literatures that resonated with the outcomes of the dialogue of the participants. The summary notes thus provided a framework for theorizing when and how issues of inequities, discrimination, marginalization, racism, diversity, and inclusion informed the meso and macro structural levels of analysis (Jacobson, 2009) for this literature review. We actively and reflexively drew upon interrogations of personal stories, experiences, and positionality to show the potential provenance of the particular perspectives and standpoints (Keane, 2015) that was brought to understanding and informing CBE’s goal to advance antiracism, equity, and inclusion.

In writing the literature, we employed some elements of the framework of Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) to assist with coding and analysis. From noting patterns/themes,

seeing plausibility, clustering to see what goes with what, counting, making contrasts/ comparisons of data, we systematically arrived at a coherent understanding of data from existing literature, the advisory council, and listening sessions to build a logical chain of evidence in putting together this work. A scaffold/outline was prepared at the beginning when we began putting this literature review document together to help concretize the frame of this body of scholarly work.

Limitations

As authors it is imperative to foreground the limitations of this literature review. The copious amount of data, the time limitations, and the subjective nature of how we include and interpret data when putting this paper together were examples of some of the limitations of this paper. Limitations may expose the conditions that may weaken the review (Rossman & Rallis, 2012), and as authors, it was important to identify and acknowledge our shortcomings. Drawing attention to our limitations does not in any way take away from what emerged during the writing of this literature review, but rather added to the trustworthiness of this study. Despite all these limitations, this does not in any way compromise the quality of systematic qualitative literature review we undertook.

Delimitations

The delimitations refer to the boundaries of the research study, based on our decision of what to include and what to exclude. The goal is to narrow the literature review to make it more manageable and relevant to issues and concerns around inequities around racism and discrimination in Canadian public schools. This was done with the intention of defining the boundaries of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). The literature review was delimited to the particular documents, including books, articles, journals, and the conversations and email

correspondence from the advisory council and listening sessions of staff/parents selected for purpose of this review.

Introduction

This literature review seeks to inform strategies to advance antiracism, equity and inclusion within the Calgary Board of Education (CBE). This work covers antiracism, equity and inclusion in school jurisdictions and spaces across Canada and elsewhere to ensure that CBE is informed of current and emerging issues that are relevant and applicable, thus informing decision making to enhance equity, achievement and well-being for all (CBE n.d.). CBE strongly believes that every student, irrespective of background, identity or personal circumstances should have the opportunity to succeed personally and academically.

The CBE in June 2020 established the Collaboration for Anti-Racism and Equity Supports (CBE CARES!) to address issues of racism, equity, and inclusion within the CBE. Contributions from the advisory council comprised of students and staff, listening sessions made up of parents/caregivers and staff, as well as written submissions from students, staff, parents/caregivers that shaped and informed this document. In approaching the literature review, we set the context for the research and established key issues to be addressed (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The key issues in this document was informed from the voices of students, staff, and parents/caregivers associated with CBE.

This review covers racism and discrimination in Canadian Schools. The experiences of Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Colour (BIPOC) students, staff, and families informed this review. A synopsis of existing Canadian research and research from around the globe highlighted issues and barriers to student success for BIPOC, LGBTQ2IA+, persons with disability, and students with complex learning needs among others was consulted in writing this literature review.

Strategies and recommendations are presented as considerations for anti-racism education in schools (Dei, 2017). The voices of students, staff, and parents/caregivers are connected to the literature in this document. The document ends with a proposal of effective practices and recommendations for CBE.

Racism and Discrimination in Canadian Schools: Experiences of Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Colour (BIPOC) Students, Staff, and Families

Canadian educational institutions across the country continue to struggle with issues of racism and discrimination. According to Hoyt (2012), racism can be explained as a particular form of prejudice defined by preconceived erroneous beliefs about race and members of racial groups. Further, Escayg (2020), agrees that racism is prevalent in the broader society and the education system as well. Though racism manifests in different forms, for the purpose of this review, we identify with racism as inequalities rooted in the system-wide operation of a society or educational system that excludes substantial numbers of members of particular groups (Henry & Tator, 2006). Racism imposes barriers and challenges to student success and achievement of particular groups of people especially black and Indigenous people of colour (BIPOC), Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQ2IA+), persons with disability, students with complex learning needs, as well as people of French Canadian heritage. Racism is a phenomenon that is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices to an extent that racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger white society (Mullings, Morgan, & Quelleng, 2016). Underrepresented populations tend to endure the most of racism in Canadian societies. Canadian society is plagued with subtle racial tensions and this has implications for minority students (Clark, Kleiman, Spanierman, Isaac, & Poolokasingham, 2014) across the educational landscape. This literature review seeks to add to

the anti-racism resource that was built on the foundation of student, staff, parents/caregivers voices that seeks to dismantle racism in the CBE school system.

Existing literature affirm the various ways in which minority and underrepresented student populations in Canada experience racism. From stereotyping and discrimination (Picower, 2010) in school communities, non-inclusive curriculum (Lorenz, 2013), teacher bias that prevents them from being culturally responsive educators (Robinson, Borden, & Robinson, 2012), to issues of confidence that leads to self-doubt and lifelong struggles (Neeaganawedin, 2013) in minority students in Canada. The challenges of minority students is further exacerbated by claims of teachers to being colour-blind in education and other contexts, that emphasizes on homogeneity and the denial of the significance of ethno-cultural heritage and lived experiences of students of colour (Hampton, 2010). According to Henry & Tator, (2006), the reality of racism and other forms of oppression experienced by Black and other marginalized youth in Canadian societies causes many to develop fatalistic attitudes about themselves, their education and their future.

Staffing issues continue to be concerns within the Canadian education system. There is ample evidence that points to a lack of diversity within the teaching body that is not wholly representative of the minority student population. This in effect adversely affects the education system of benefits of diversity to all other students and the teacher community (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009) within Canada. Despite continuous debates of talking about equity, diversity, and inclusion in society, this demographic transformation has not yet reflected in the education community (Henry, Dua, Kobayashi, James, Li, Ramos, & Smith, 2017). Current literature continue to reinforce the dominant composition of white teachers in Canada. Teacher education is mostly white, middle class, female, heterosexual teachers, at the expense of broader diversity

(Duckworth, Thomas, & Bland, 2016; Haddix, 2017). There is also evidence of minority staff who continue to raise concerns about discrimination and marginalization they experience within the education system with regards to their race from their colleagues (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). To foster equity in teaching spaces, teacher education programs must encourage teachers to deeply examine personal identities, self-conceptualizations and beliefs as the starting point for reducing prejudice and enhancing respect for multiple perspectives (Flores, Clark, Claeys, & Villarreal, 2007) in Canadian educational institutions.

Parents/guardians of minority students of colour do also experience challenges within the educational system in Canada. Issues of bias and tension in the relationships between parents and teachers is not uncommon (Evans, 2013; Houle, 2015; Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012). Stereotyping of families from a particular region of the world affects the way teachers relate to parents. An example regarding refugee children in schools in Canada, it appears that teachers, are not adequately trained in the areas of professional development to respond to the various academic and social needs of refugee youth who have experienced significant gaps in their formal education (MacNevin, 2012). It is important for educators to adopt a humanizing pedagogy according to Bartolome (1994), that values the students' background knowledge, language, culture, and life experiences, and creates learning contexts where power is shared by students and teachers. Such an approach in itself offers learning opportunities for teachers to learn and confront their own biases and assumptions.

Identity and intersectionality: Race, gender, religion, LGBTQ2IA+

In understanding and learning about racism, it is key to move away from the reductionist notion of race as being merely about skin colour. Understanding racism is beyond the simplistic binary of black and white. It is about the fact that we cannot understand race without simultaneously

alluding to gender, class, [dis]ability, religion, sexuality, language and vice versa (Dei & Simmons, 2010). Individuals within school spaces hold multiple and fluid identities, for example a student can identify as muslim, black, and queer. Borrowing from Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality on how race and sex affects black women, Kraus, Park, and Tan (2017) posit intersectionality as a framework that allows us to understand how social identities—such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, ability, and gender identity—overlap with one another and with systems of power that oppress and advantage people in the workplace and broader community. According to Taylor and Peter (2011), there is evidence of oppression by way of homophobia and transphobia that occurs in every classroom in every school in Canada that translates into bullying and harassment for students with multiple identities within school spaces. Taylor and Peter (2011) go further to contend that to progress academically and developmentally, all students need a safe and supportive school environment. Unfortunately, transgender and gender nonconforming/nonbinary students are struggling to find such an environment in the school system.

It is also important to draw attention to religious identity in schools in Canada. An example is how Zine (2006) describes the way gendered identities are constructed in the schooling experiences of young Muslim women, and examine how their multiple identities of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender position them in marginalized sites within the education system in Canada. These young women reside at the nexus of dual oppressions, confronting racism and islamophobia in society at large and at the same time contending with patriarchal forms of religious oppression in their communities. Further, existing literature paints a picture of how islamophobia and the curriculum intersect within the public school system. Zaidi (2019), agrees that although islamophobia is present in many countries, including Canada, she calls into

question the traditional trajectory of how the sentiments of islamophobia can be successfully countered in the classroom to reduce sociophobic tensions and increase cultural and linguistic awareness. This can be achieved through culturally sustaining pedagogy, whose primary objective is to embrace literate, linguistic, and cultural pluralism in the Canadian school system. Below is a snapshot of how minority and underrepresented students, comprising of black and other students of colour, Indigenous students, LGBTQ2IA+ students, and students with disability fare within the school system in Canada.

Minority and underrepresented students: *Black students, Indigenous students, and other minority students of colour*

We will begin by exploring literature on some minority student populations within the education system in Canada and the barriers and challenges they encounter on a quotidian basis in the education system in Canada. Black students and other minority students of colour in schools across Canada continue to face racism, both overt and covert. Racism in the education system is not uncommon (Maynard, 2017) in Canada. From minority students voices being silenced in the classrooms, to use of inappropriate language against them, culinary discrimination, and a lack of representation of educators who look like negatively impacts how students of colour thrive in public schools in Canada. To have an inclusive environment for students of colour, Ghosh (2019) calls on educators to provide equal educational opportunities to all children irrespective of their social category in terms of ethnicity/race, class, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation and physical or mental challenges. The idea is to make all students feel that they are part of the classroom, the school, and the society so as to avoid the varied effects of marginalization and isolation.

Indigenous students

Indigenous students continue to be marginalized and discriminated in K-12 school systems across Canada in varied ways. Understanding Indigenous culture is overly represented in high schools with over emphasis on the focus on residential schools. It is no surprise that even though Canada is become increasingly ethnically and racially diverse, the Canadian Indigenous population has grown significantly, yet racialized and Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in major institutions (Henry et al, 2017). There is a general lack of appreciation for alternative Indigenous ways of knowing has led many Indigenous students to become disillusioned and not see themselves in the materials presented to them in school (DiGiorgio, 2019). Educators according to Leiding (2006), need to be better educated about their Indigenous students' interests and need to be better educated about their own biases. Many Indigenous children are identified as being deficient academically, when what is being excluded is their way of learning and knowing. Their history needs to be acknowledged, and they need to be accepted and acknowledged for the valuable knowledge, culture and ability they have (DiGiorgio, 2019). Indigenous students will feel included and part the school system when their ways of knowing is included in the educational curriculum. Indigenous scholars continue to add their voices to the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems and how that can generate new visions and practices of public education((Jacob, Sabzalian, Jansen, Tobin, Vincent, & LaChance, 2018) in Canada. Battiste (2002) recognizes the diversity and plurality of Indigenous knowledges and to capture a nuanced and holistic consideration of Indigenous knowledges as entire systems bearing in mind that Indigenous knowledges are heterogeneous, not just across Indigenous communities but even within them. Kovach (2009) further calls for Indigenous pedagogies, Ottman and Pritchard (2012), acknowledges the richness of Indigenous knowledge, tradition and customs,

and depth in epistemological (ways of knowing) and ontological (ways of being) understanding that can add to the educational wealth of Canada. Lastly, Donald (2012), is also of the view that inculcating Indigenous wisdom traditions and knowledge systems in Canadian schools can enhance the collective understandings of what it means to live in Canada as a multicultural society.

LGBTQ2IA+ students: Implications for GSA

Literature points to the evidence of homophobia in schools in Canada. Generic safe schools policies that do not include specific measures on homophobia are not effective in improving the school climate for LGBTQ2IA+ students (The National School Climate Survey, 2019) despite efforts of the Gay Straight Alliances (GSA) to foster a welcoming environment for all. Taylor and Peters (2011) says it is the responsibility of the school boards to foster a safe and positive school environment. Boards should ensure that students are aware of the anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia policies they have in place. Making such students aware of their rights improve the school climate for LGBTQ2IA+ students. Considerable efforts across Canada by some provincial governments and school systems are working to create respectful, inclusive and accepting school communities for all young people. Some school boards have adopted specific policies that recognize the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ2IA+ students, staff and family members (The National School Climate Survey, 2019).

Students with disability

Students with disabilities face challenges within educational institutions in Canada. The challenges tend to make school children occluded and not feel fully welcomed within the school system. It noteworthy to point out that discrimination and the exclusion of persons with disabilities has long been recognized as one of the most prevalent human rights issues in Canada.

But what makes an already bad situation worse is that for persons with disabilities the odds are often already against them because of the barriers they face in school (Canada Human Rights Commission, 2017). The 2012 report on Equality Rights of People with disabilities survey conducted on school children with disabilities in Canada revealed incidents of bullying, 35% of persons with disabilities reported being avoided or excluded because of their disability, 37% of Cpersons with disabilities in Canada reported taking fewer courses because of their disability, and 11% quitting school early because of their disabilities. Titchkosky (2011) implores educational institutions to move beyond disability as a personal and individual issue but rather as a valuable interpretive space to further explore and understand inclusive practices in schools by thinking critically about being in the world among others, normalcy, and privilege often associated with able-ism (Castrodale, 2014)in school spaces.

Kumashiro (2000) addresses the myriad ways in which racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression play out in schools. Educators can engage in understanding the dynamics of oppression and articulating ways to work against it; whether working from a feminist, critical, multicultural, queer, or other perspectives, they can agree that oppression is a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g., having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized.

Current Research

It is important to foreground this literature review by noting that discrimination and marginalization rarely exists in isolation. It is comprised of complex elements of oppression, that includes sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, learning disabilities, colonization, wealth inequality, and religious discrimination (Canadian Cultural Mosaic Foundation n.d.). Current and existing research literature abounds with the various forms and manifestations of

racism that affects students, staff and families of minority students across schools in Canada. We begin by foregrounding on the types and forms racism that exist in Canada education spaces. Racism for the purpose of this literature review could be framed as posited by Paradies, Harris and Anderson (2008) as the avoidable and unfair actions that further disadvantage the disadvantaged or further advantage the advantaged. Canada as a country has been built on the foundations of racism and the entitlement accorded to the non-racialized White race, further entrenching their privileges within Canadian society (Allan & Smylie, 2015) to the detriment of black and Indigenous people of colour. Attention should be drawn to the perspectives, insights and experiences of all Canadians irrespective of colour, caste or creed.

The purpose of this section is to draw attention to various forms by which racism is manifested in high schools in Canada. Four broad themes were identified as pervasive forms of racism and manifestation in schools across Canada.

a) Eurocentric curriculum

The continuous adaptation and use of eurocentric epistemologies decenters and suppresses other ways of knowing. The inclusion of deeply reflective pedagogies and practices (Bailey, Eliuk, Miladinovic, & Collister, 2017; Dencev & Collister, 2010; Nelson, 2014) that embraces Indigenous and black pedagogies is largely missing from the Canadian curriculum. By creating opportunities for students to see themselves in the curriculum, this not only validates students' various linguistic, ethnic, cultural, religious, sexual orientation identities in the classroom (Cummins, Hu, Markus, & Montero, 2015; Gay, 2010) but enhances their sense of inclusion within the education system. Nadelson, Boham, Conlon-Khan, Fuentealba, Hall, Hoetker, & Shapiro (2012), advocate for moving away from a eurocentric education to a multicultural education structured to specifically address issues of diversity by integrating such courses into

the traditional curriculum through the use of different instructional approaches. Besides moving away from the eurocentric curriculum, teachers in the education system have key role to play. Ghosh (2019), argues that one way to develop a multicultural and multi-perspective worldview in students is for teachers to be global-minded and multicultural. Teachers must themselves understand the Other, value difference and see diversity as an asset and a fundamental characteristic of human life. In North America according to Demulder, Stribling and Dallman (2016), there is growing evidence that teachers are not trained to educate students for the fast pace of societal change in the world. This situation is mirrored in Canada and It is most likely Canadian teacher candidates are no different (Ghosh & Galczynski, 2014) and leaves room for a lot of improvement. By maintaining the current eurocentric education curriculum in Canada, in the words of Appiah (1992), we cannot be fair to all students by being colour-blind because Canadian society is not colour-blind; it privileges certain ethnic groups. Fairness, not colour-blindness, is a fundamental principle of justice and equity and a driving force in dismantling racism and discrimination within the Canadian educational system. Ghosh (2019) emphasizes on multicultural education that targets structural discrimination in the school, rather than on the student as the problem, and aim for inclusion and transformative change for all students, be they the dominant groups or students who are different in various ways.

b) Demographic data: lack of representation, inclusion, and diversity

With a population of 37.5 million people (Statistics Canada, 2019), made up of a foreign-born population of almost 20% (OECD, 2015) and an Indigenous population of almost 6% (Statistics Canada, 2018), Canada continues to struggle with issues of representation, inclusion, and diversity in its educational institutions. Much attention has not being paid to the voices, perspectives, and experiences of the underrepresented student and staff. Underrepresented

population within the Canadian education system includes blacks, Indigenous, other people of colour, people with varied sexual orientation, and learning disabilities, According to Houshmand, Spanierman, & Tafarodi (2014), in Canada there is enough evidence to show how some minority students struggle with anxiety. This makes racialized students unable to engage in class activities for fear of negative encounters with racism due to concerns such as the ridiculing of linguistic accents, bigotry related to low expectation/deficit thinking, and blatant silencing of racial and ethnic minority voices. The lack of representation of people of colour enables and fosters discriminatory and marginalizing practices in educational spaces and reifies the status quo of non-inclusion. racism and discrimination experienced by students who are non-white and the Other. That is because the Canadian education system has not sufficiently dealt with ‘difference’ and the ‘other’(Ghosh & Galczynski, 2014). The lack of representation manifests itself in ways where minority students do not see themselves fully represented within the teaching staff of their respective schools. Black students, Indigenous students, queer students, and students with learning disabilities are not adequately represented within the education system in Canada. More training for teachers is required to inclusive education as “a process of responding to individual difference within the structures and processes that are available to all learners” (Florian, 2008, p. 202). Teachers’ beliefs in the education system about inclusive education can provide a starting point for enhancing teacher education and in-service professional development (Di Gennaro, Pace, Iolanda, & Aiello, 2014; McGhie-Richmond, Irvine, Loreman, Cizman, & Lupart, 2012;). Mention of representation, inclusion, and diversity cannot be complete without drawing attention to the marginalization faced by French immersion school staff (Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchel, & Roy, 2008; Lapkin, Mady, & Arnott, 2009; Richards, 2002) in predominantly English speaking Canada within the broader context of the education system.

c) Bias, assumptions, and discrimination

The presence of structural racism in Western societies (Tourse, Hamilton-Mason, & Wewiorski, 2019; West, 2017) disproportionately affects underrepresented populations in the Canadian educational system. This in effect fosters biases, assumptions, and discrimination. One manifestation in the Canadian society is the scourge of microaggressions. Microaggressions manifests in various forms and contexts. Racism is not always overt, but covertly existing beneath the patina of normalcy in the Canadian society. Microaggression can be explained as derogatory slights or insults directed at a target person or persons who are members of an oppressed group (Torino, Rivera, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Sue, 2019). In some cases the perpetrators of microaggressions are not even aware they are committing microaggressions towards the other. For an equitable education system in Canada, educators must challenge the dehumanizing practices rooted in racism, oppression, colonialism and other such -isms, that live and breathe within the schools unquestioned (McLaren, 2016). Documentary evidence points to the fact that in Canada, one in five Canadians experience racism regularly. This is mostly among the Indigenous and black populations, where racism generally takes the form of microaggressions especially in contact with non-coloured races (Environics Institute for Survey & Research Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2019). Though Canada prides itself as a multicultural society, amid the widespread view that it lives in a post-racial society and that racism is a thing of the past. Sefa Dei (1999) has argued against this idea, which he calls a “denial of difference” (p. 17) and agrees that racism is still rife in the Canadian society, of which the educational system is part.

d) Cultural tensions

Relationships and differences between diverse cultures potentially fosters mistrust. Working to understand each other, by replacing ignorance with knowledge will go a long way in aiding anti-racism work. The implementation of multicultural policies has been deemed necessary to manage the increasing diversity in societies with which educational systems were confronted (Ghosh & Galczynski, 2014). According to research done by DeVillar and Jiang (2011) in a North American setting, surveys from 250 student-teachers, exploring personal opinions about their perceived effectiveness in teaching cultures different from their own concluded that both practicing teachers and preservice teachers are poorly prepared for teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds. They found evidence that the assumptions, knowledge, and attitudes about a student's culture impacts teacher communication and teaching effectiveness with diverse learners (Nieto, 2010). Fostering enhanced cultural competence and awareness of inequities within classrooms (Malewski, Sharma, & Phillion, 2012) for educators will potentially result in creating inclusive, equitable classrooms that foster intercultural sensitivity (Cushner & Brennan, 2007) amongst students and teachers of all races and background. Cultural tensions between teachers and students of different backgrounds can be ameliorated by creating the right environment to prepare educators to teach a greater variety of students (Kuah, 2017).

Effective Practices

Current literature has numerous examples of effective practices of addressing inequities within the Canadian K-12 school system. An example we drew from was the March 2013 *Anti-racism Education in Canada: Best Practices* report from the Centre for Race and Culture, a project funded by the Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund of Alberta, that offered key

findings on effective/best practices against racism as well as findings of existing racism in schools across Canada (Centre for Race and Culture, 2013).

Effective Practices

1. Begin with baseline and Needs assessment research
 - Increasingly diverse populations in urban centres requires that schools collect data to understand their changing demographics
 - Collection of statistical data on demographics of students, district & school staff
 - Survey research on staff and students' experiences with racism
 - Analysis of success of policy implementation
 - Consulting with parents and other community members about their needs
2. Be embedded in a district policy
 - Policies that establish District's commitment to equity, inclusion and anti-racism education
3. Be led by district
 - Cultural competency training for all district staff
 - Training and ongoing support for dealing with racism appropriately
 - Assign an individual or a team responsible for anti-racism education across the District
4. Include materials to support policy
 - Teaching materials that help teachers implement policy in the classroom
 - Practical guides for all staff to assist in implementing policy within the school
5. Be a whole school initiative
 - Cultural competency training for all staff including administration, teachers, and teacher aids
 - Cultural competency training for students
 - Involve parents and other community members

- Support for teachers to implement inclusive curricula
6. Address gaps in the curriculum
- Develop culturally appropriate assessment tools
 - Assure that students' and teachers' diverse backgrounds are reflected in learning materials
7. Build on current efforts
- Build on existing research
 - Build on Alberta Education priorities
 - Build on school's priorities and existing diversity policies and initiatives

Racism in Canadian Schools

1. Forms of racism
- Violent incidents based on racism occurs between students
 - Overt and covert forms of racism occur student-student, teacher-teacher, teacher-student, administration-teacher, administration-student, teacher/administration-parent
 - Graffiti (e.g. symbols & direct comments in bathroom stalls)
 - Name-calling involving references to race, ethnicity, and heritage
 - Racially motivated harassment
2. The student experience
- Racism between students often goes unreported
 - Racism experienced by students and perpetrated by teachers often goes unreported
 - Students who experience racism feel alienated and unsafe
 - Students who experience racism suffer academically
3. The teacher experience
- Racism between teachers often goes unreported
 - Teachers who experience racism often feel alienated

- Teachers who experience racism feel unsupported
- Teachers are often unable to recognize racism because they have not been trained to do so
- Teachers are often reluctant to report racism and talk about it with their students even when they can recognize it

4. Inequity in hiring practices

- Many students and parents do not see themselves represented in the teaching staff, and less so in the administrative staff
- Many studies report the lack of visible minority teachers in urban Canadian schools (e.g. Silver & Mallett, 2002)

5. Lack of inclusivity In the curriculum

- Studies show that curricula across Canada is Eurocentric
- Canadian history textbooks often represent racism as something that happens outside of Canada
- Canadian history textbooks often identify race as a biological given rather than a social construct
- Many students do not see themselves represented in the curriculum

6. Inequitable school culture

- Covert racism is embedded in everyday conversation through derogatory comments and assumptions based on stereotypes
- Racism is often seen as an individual issue rather than a systemic issue
- Though many Districts have policies in place, there is a lack of follow-through from policy to action
- Studies show that administrators are often reluctant to admit that racism exists and when they do, they often downplay its

significance

- Administrators often do not know how to recognize racism
- Students, teachers and parents state that when they do report incidents of racism to administration, their experiences are dismissed
- There is a lack of understanding among White teachers, students and administration that discrimination against White people is not the same as racism

From [Centre for Race and Culture/Data from Effective Practices and Racism in Canadian Schools from Tables 1 and 2 of] “*Anti-Racism in Education in Canada: Best Practices*,” by A. L. Pauchulo for Centre for Race and Culture, 2013. Copyright [2013] by Centre for Race and Culture. Adapted with permission.

Summary

The purpose of this section is to synthesize the results of our findings from the literature review, advisory council, and listening sessions. This final section offers recommendations and suggestions to the issues and challenges identified. Suggestions and implications for programs, practice and policy (in CBE) that support students and educators will be discussed.

Anti-racism education and professional learning

Education on anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion should be made mandatory across all levels of the organization. Changing the culture and habits of the organization can be done through continuous education. Dei (1995) refers to anti-racism education as an action oriented strategy for institutional strategic change to address issues of racism and social oppression. In Dei (1996), he goes further to propose anti-racism education that interrogates how whiteness is delineated and read in the schools and in the wider society, how white culture is so dominant, and why are the norms, values, ideas, perspectives and traditions of one social group adopted as the standard by most Canadian institutions. By being able to navigate and have courageous questions to challenge the status quo, minority populations within the CBE will be find their

voice and see themselves equitably represented within the system. The purpose of anti-racist education is to develop an understanding of the dynamics of racism and to build capacity to respond to racism (BC Antiracism Research Final Report 2016) in the CBE system. Anti-racism education is explicit in identifying and addressing race as a matter of power and equity, acknowledging the importance of lived experience, and politicizing education to uncover and dismantle the structural roots of inequality (Corneau & Stergiopoulos, 2012; Naseem, 2011). Closely related to anti-racism education is the importance of professional learning within the CBE. Learning to change entrenched habits is an arduous task. Professional learning and seeking to dislodge racism with CBE should be informed by understanding the structural inequities that perpetuates whiteness as an intellectual inheritance of Europeaness and related Christian beliefs and practices that are evident in everyday dismissals of other cultures and forms of intellectual engagement (James, 2009). Professional learning should seek to embrace other cultures, beliefs, sexual orientations, experiences, perspectives and abilities/disabilities of all minority students and staff of colour. The use of appropriate language should be an integral part of the professional training of all educators within the CBE. Educators within the CBE need support to broach conversations related to racism, sexism, and homophobia which Lindo (2013) refers to as “controversial issues” that reveals that teachers need more support if they were truly to be expected to challenge social injustice in the classroom.

Voices of underrepresented students and staff

Having a process in place and space for underrepresented populations within CBE to continuously have their voices heard will be integral to addressing inequities within the system. There is enough evidence to show that black students and educators are subject to oppression

in the form of anti-black racism (Newton, 2017) within CBE. By allowing voices, experiences, and perspectives of racialized people coupled with the use of a race-conscious approach to practices (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) processes will allow for a rich description of participants' experiences and exploration of the meanings that they derive from their experiences, which hitherto would have silenced those voices (Trahar, 2013). The contributions and from black, Indigenous and minority people of colour within the CBE set the tone for a transformative shift in the way CBE addresses issues of diversity and inclusion. Allowing for diverse voices to be heard will provide multiple meanings of the world (Norris & Sawyer, 2012) and different ways of knowing thereby leading to a better understanding of all cultures. Closely related to amplifying the voices of the minority population within the CBE, the ongoing dialogue on dismantling occlusion and inequities should be part of the fabric of the CBE culture. The conversations must continue, dialogues about embracing differences should be strongly encouraged. CBE should strive to offer diversity and equity courses despite potential discomfort or difficult conversations that will ensue. This is a way by which deficit ways of thinking and practices as educators (Ciuffetelli Parker, 2017) will be shifted to allow for a new culture and way of doing things for the benefit of all within the CBE.

Demographic data

Data as a tool for addressing inequities within the CBE system is of profound importance. Without data, the CBE will continue to remain inequitable. The availability of data as evidence will allow for measures to be put in place to bring about holistic changes. Data will allow for corrective mechanisms to be put in place to rectify structural and institutional oversights. An example of how data will be used by the CBE will be to identify the pathways of how many Indigenous students transition into post-secondary. The goal in collecting and utilization of data

is primarily to assist with improvement within the CBE. Mendelson (2006) says the availability of data provides an accurate picture of the state of affairs as it stands and suggests what should be the focus for the future. Tracking data especially of Indigenous, black, and people of colour for students and staff alike will also go a long way in addressing issues with representation and the equity gap. CBE can best serve its minority population best when data is readily available. Unlike the Edmonton public schools in Alberta, meaningful data is largely absent within the CBE.

Conclusion

Changing the narrative within the CBE and exploring the next steps in building meaningful, implementable ways CBE to address racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion will require the concerted efforts of leadership, educators, parents, and students within the CBE community. Continuous courageous conversations, professional training, holding everyone accountable, learning and unlearning, and embracing of all irrespective of one's socio-cultural, race, sexuality, religion, ability or disability background will make the CBE an inclusive space for all where views are acknowledged and tolerated. We explored the feedback and literature from the advisory council and multiple listening sessions to inform this work. Further exploration was on racism and how discrimination impacts black, Indigenous, and persons of colour be they students, staff, and families. We also thematically highlighted what we heard from the students, staff, and parents of the CBE community. Effective practices and recommendations were presented for making the CBE an equitable institution. It is our fervent desire that this literature review will supplement the Final Report and be a working document for dismantling racism and discrimination within the CBE.

Definition of Terms

Anti-Racism: Anti-racism is an active process of seeing and being in the world with the intention of working to identify, challenge, and change the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate individual and structural racism. In the absence of anti-racism, we (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequitable institutions and societies (Loyola University Maryland, n.d)

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (The BIPOC Project, n.d.)

Disability: For the purpose of this study, disability is conceptualized as how persons with disability are understood and valued in particular educational spaces with emphasis to access and social relations between people, organization of the material physical world, and how power relations shape and influence who belongs where and why (Titchkosky, 2011)

Discrimination: Includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation, or preference which — being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, economic condition, or birth — has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education, in particular with regard to access, education of inferior quality, or conditions that are incompatible with human dignity (Council of Ministers of Education, 2018)

Diversity: Diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. It is about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin (Global Diversity Practice, n.d.)

Equity: A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. (Ontario's Equity & Inclusive Education Strategy, 2013.)

Identity: According to Robinson (1999) identity is both visible and invisible domains of the self that influence self-construction. They include, but are not limited to, ethnicity, skin color, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and physical and intellectual ability

Inclusion: Is being included within either a group or society as a whole. It is important to understand someone's differences so that you can include them and treat them equally and fairly. People can feel excluded if they are not able to join in with activities (The Care Certificate n.d.)

Intersectionality: It is the study of how various forms of oppression, discrimination, domination, and other social processes intersect and influence each other. An example is how BIPOC students in schools can belong to more than one marginalized group (Diversity in Teaching n.d.)

LGBTQ2IA+: Stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Two-Spirit, Intersex, Asexual, and other identities that fall outside of cisgender and heterosexual paradigms (University of Guelph, n.d.)

Marginalization: Relates to those who have been marginalised in school contexts, such as those defined as having special educational needs, disabled students, those from ethnic minorities, and those who appear to be disadvantaged by their gender (Francis & Skelton, 2005)

Microaggressions: The everyday slights, indignities, put downs and insults that people of color, women, LGBTQ2IA+ populations or those who are marginalized experiences in their day-to-day interactions with people (Sue, 2010)

Queer: An umbrella term to refer to all LGBTQ2IA+ people. It is also a non-binary term used by individuals who see their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as fluid(University of Massachusetts, n.d.)

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CBE CARES!

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