



**Multiculturalism: Grande Prairie's Journey into Fostering
Diverse Communities– *How far has it traveled along this road
and will it ever get there?***

By

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Introduction

- ◆ In 2004, Grande Prairie and District Multicultural Association (GPDMA) conducted a Community Consultation Needs Assessment Study.
- ◆ Previous studies had shown that visible minorities and Aboriginals were more likely to experience ethnic racial discrimination in the community.
- ◆ More understanding of the racial and discrimination issues would help GPDMA identify the future direction in the anti-racist effort and promotion of diversity in the community.
- ◆ The study was funded by the Alberta Human Rights and Multiculturalism Education Grant Program.

Main Aims of this Presentation

- ◆ To share with you Grande Prairie's journey into fostering diverse communities;
- ◆ To reflect on its challenges and achievements;
- ◆ To discuss how far or near Grande Prairie is to its destination.

Objectives of the Community Needs Assessment Study

- ◆ To rate the overall acceptance and job opportunities for minorities and Aboriginals in the City of Grande Prairie and the surrounding communities;
- ◆ To assess the needs of the communities with regards to multicultural issues;
- ◆ To identify gaps and barriers related to discrimination and racism;
- ◆ To identify the causes and manifestation of racism and discrimination;
- ◆ To identify strategies for combating racism and discrimination in an attempt to make the City of Grande Prairie and the surrounding communities more inclusive.

Methodology

- ◆ The study employed two approaches:
 - Focus Groups Interviews – 73 participants:
 - ✧ Aboriginals
 - ✧ Educators
 - ✧ College students, and
 - ✧ Youth
 - ✧ Eight focus sessions conducted.

Methodology (cont'd)

□ Key Informant Self-completed Surveys –

❖ 202 respondents recruited through:

- Personal networking
- Interagency staff
- School Principals (Primary, Junior and Senior High)
- Office of Family & Community Support Services
- Employers



Respondents Characteristics

- ❑ Overall more,
- ❑ Females (56.4%)
- ❑ Men (36.1%) participated;
- ❑ The rest (7.5%) did not indicate gender;
- ❑ The majority were between 30 and 49 years of age;

Respondents Characteristics (cont'd)

□ Education wise,

- ✧ 47.0% attained Bachelor's,
- ✧ 13.9% Master's and
- ✧ 8.9% Ph.D. degrees.

□ Just about 30% had completed secondary education or less.

Respondents Characteristics (cont'd)

- ❑ Employment status and subsequently household income differed markedly,
 - ✧ 83.2% full time employed,
 - ✧ 2.0% unemployed,
 - ✧ 7.9% part-time, and
 - ✧ over 20% had annual household income of \$130,000.00 and above.

Ethnic Background of Respondents

Aboriginal
Black
Canadian/White
Caucasian
German
French
Jewish
Latino
Asian

Metis
Russian
Spanish
Swedish
Ukrainian
Scottish
English/Anglo-Saxon
Arab
Scottish/English

Chinese
Scottish/Irish
Italian
Polish
Slavic
Irish
Don't know
No Answer

The Design of Key Informant Survey Questions

- ❑ The questions were designed covering the following sections:
 - ❖ Community Image
 - ❖ Community concerns
 - ❖ Diversity concerns
 - ❖ Respondent Characteristics.
- ❑ Full contents of the questionnaires are contained in the Appendix of the study report.

Key Findings of the Study

□ Focus Group Concepts of Racism

- ❖ The Participants' concept of racism/discrimination expressed in all Focus Groups Sessions related to :
 - ✧ Negative judgement based on race – stereotypes
 - ✧ Hate and bad treatment
 - ✧ Dislike of other people because of their ethnic background
 - ✧ Physical appearances
 - ✧ Religion and cultural differences
 - ✧ Negative connotation based on ethnocentricity feelings of division superior/inferior race.

Key Findings of the Study (Cont'd)

- Focus Group Concepts of Discrimination based on personal experiences and perceptions:
 - ❖ Differentiation based on perceived differences- can be any characteristics that define a person;
 - ❖ Exclusion based on: skin colour, appearance, size, religion;
 - ❖ Exclusion based on behavior style of dressing/clothes;
 - ❖ Exclusion based on status, employed/unemployed, teen pregnancy, married/unmarried;
 - ❖ Health issues – diseases, HIV/Aids, handicap.

Key Findings of the Study (Cont'd)

□ Personal Examples and Experiences

- ❖ There is strong racism against Natives/Metis – my brother dropped out of hockey because of his looks;
- ❖ My teacher thinks that I am bad and rude kid because I do not look at her in the face directly when she is talking to me;
- ❖ These people, coming to this country with their own beliefs and not adopting/adapting to Canadian culture and beliefs;
- ❖ *Teenagers* – all seniors are old fashioned; judge teens based on their clothing – big pants/piercing tattoos;
- ❖ *Seniors* - teen are “hoodlum” and scary.

Key Findings of the Study (Cont'd)

❑ *Places where Racism and Discrimination occur:*

- ✧ Both covert and overt racism have been experienced by visible minorities and Aboriginals ;
- ✧ Racism and discrimination occur in employment, housing, schools and educational programs;
- ✧ Some minorities were asked to return to their own countries by strangers in the streets;
- ✧ Some visible minorities and Aboriginals reported unfavourable different treatments by shopkeepers, restaurants and educators;

Key Findings of the Study (cont'd)

❑ *Major Causes of Racism and Discrimination:*

- ✧ Desire to maintain economic power, control and wealth;
- ✧ Ignorance , fear of differences/stupidity;
- ✧ Narrow mindedness, arrogance and primitive family values passed down over generations/ bad role modeling.
- ✧ Media stereotyping and negative images and getting information from one side only.
- ✧ Racial pride.

Key Findings of the Study (cont'd)

□ *Perceived Strategies:*

- ✧ Speaking out against racism and discrimination where they happen;
- ✧ Lobbying for legislation to employ minorities as percentage of the working force;
- ✧ Incorporating multiculturalism into the curriculum starting from elementary education upwards;
- ✧ Integrating aboriginals into the classrooms;
- ✧ Organizing local festivals that celebrates various cultures and emphasize inclusion where and whenever possible.

Key Findings of the Study (cont'd)

❑ *Perceived Barriers Included:*

- ✧ Ignoring that there are racist and discriminatory problems in the community;
- ✧ Having “red-neck” attitude as a racial pride;
- ✧ Media targeting certain groups;
- ✧ Long held bad attitude of fear of people of other races and cultural differences;
- ✧ Ignorance/arrogance, backwardness and stupidity.

Key Findings of the Study (cont'd)

□ *Perceived gaps identified included:*

- ✧ Lack of experience with other people and cultures;
- ✧ Lack of punitive measures for practicing racism and discrimination;
- ✧ Ignorance of the bigger world;
- ✧ Lack of positive news about other races;
- ✧ Lack of respect, understanding and tolerance;
- ✧ Lack of affordable housing for all I the community

Post-Discussion Evaluation

- Most valuable discussion to the participants included:
 - ❖ Learning how other people feel about racism;
 - ❖ Causes of racism and discrimination;
 - ❖ Realization of racism/discrimination in Grande;
 - ❖ Methods to combat racism/discrimination;
 - ❖ Strategies to reduce/stop racism;
 - ❖ The dangers of lack of education/ignorance about racism.

Post-Discussion Evaluation (Cont'd)

❑ Lessons Learned by the Participants

- ❖ Racism/discrimination is of greater concern than I thought;
- ❖ Racism can be combated if we work at it;
- ❖ There is need for multicultural education in schools and society;
- ❖ I got to realize that my family needs education on race awareness;
- ❖ I became aware that even the most innocent racial jokes can hurt somebody;
- ❖ I got convinced that our differences are not at all bad;
- ❖ Racism stems out of sheer ignorance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- ❑ The study was a brief survey of some of the main causes of racial discrimination;
- ❑ The key message was that GPDMA must remain vigilant and continue to challenge racism and discrimination;
- ❑ It was very difficult to define racism and racial discrimination in a precise way.
- ❑ The participants related the definitions of racism and discrimination to their perceptions , understanding, and experience.

Recommendations for GPDMA

❏ *The Major Recommendations for the GPDMA:*

- ✧ Education of the public about multiculturalism;
- ✧ GPDMA in collaboration with GPRC to provide formal training on anti-racism and diversity for students, instructors and faculty
- ✧ Advocacy for a more just and racial free society;
- ✧ Welcoming and integrating newcomers into the community;
- ✧ Promoting festivals that showcase different cultures;
- ✧ Similar studies should be conducted regularly every three to five years;
- ✧ GPDMA to develop Plan of Action to combat racism/discrimination.

Reflections on Grande Prairie & District Multicultural Association

- ❑ Grande Prairie & District Multicultural Association (GPDMA) is a non-profit organization , registered on March 24, 1987.**
- ❑ The objective of the Association is to promote an intercultural climate of understanding, acceptance and respect in order to reflect the cultural diversity present within our community.**

Mission of GPDMA

- To foster inter-relationships among associated groups (cultural groups, individuals, other associations), by working in synergistic partnerships to build an environment that:**
 - ❖ Promotes unity in diversity;**
 - ❖ Offers educational, social and recreational opportunities;**
 - ❖ Promotes physical and mental health and well-being and addresses relevant issues.**

Values of GPDMA

- ☐ Respect of different cultures;
- ☐ Partnerships with community organizations and associations;
- ☐ Coming together to support one another;
- ☐ Sharing knowledge/interactions;
- ☐ People inter-connecting with people & appreciating differences.

GPDMA's Implementation Plan – Projects/Activities

□ The Diverse City-

- ✧ The Diverse City project was a major project funded by Heritage Canada and Alberta Multiculturalism Commission.**
- ✧ The Diverse City project addressed the needs of the community.**
- ✧ Through education, the project addressed the issues of discrimination through:**
 - inclusion,**
 - increased awareness, and**
 - sensitivity to diversity in our community.**

GPDMA's Projects/Activities on Diversity (cont'd)

❑ School Outreach-

- ✧ Involved presentations at schools on nature of diversity and positive aspects of cultural similarities and differences;**
- ✧ The project targeted children aged 10-13 years;**
- ✧ Children's expression contests were launched and geared towards celebrating the advantages of a culturally diverse city.**

GPDMA's Projects/Activities on Diversity (cont'd)

□ Professional Development

- ✧ **This section of the implementation plan educated the public and targeted:**
 - **primary-care givers such as parents,**
 - **teachers,**
 - **recreational workers,**
 - **community liaisons and**
 - **agency employees.**

Expected Outcomes of GPDMA's Projects/Activities

- ☐ **Better understanding of diversity in the whole community;**
- ☐ **Better understanding within families; (educating children can go a long way in educating the family);**
- ☐ **A community that was more receptive and welcoming to newcomers from other countries and/or cultures.**

The Achievements of GPDMA's Projects/Activities

- ❑ GPDMA ran out of funding
- ❑ The projects have not been evaluated
- ❑ GPDMA got dissolved again.

Recommendations Related to GPDMA

- ❑ In the sake of *The Alberta Multiculturalism Act*:
- ❑ GPDMA should be reactivated;
- ❑ Another study should be conducted to gage the current magnitude of racism/discrimination in Grande Prairie and surrounding communities;
- ❑ Funding should be made available by the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission in collaboration with the City of Grande Prairie.

Conclusion

- ❑ Canada is a land of immigrants;
- ❑ We should be encouraged to live in harmony amongst ourselves and with the Aboriginals;
- ❑ The “Honey” , in this “Land of Honey”, is too much for everybody;
- ❑ Personal story/experience of a dog and a cat living in one home;
- ❑ Let us do every thing to eradicate racism and discrimination once and for all in Alberta and Canada, as a whole.
- ❑ It is Possible and it is Achievable.**

The End

Thank you for your attention!