



## **All Are Welcome Here 2019: Facilitated Roundtable Discussions**

### **Summary Report**

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## Introduction

On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, All Are Welcome Here was an interactive event organized at Museum London to celebrate efforts towards creating a more welcoming community. This collaborative event brought together individuals across London to participate in an open discussion on how we can combat racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination personally and within our diverse community. The dialogue considered the different factors at play in individual, organizational, and community levels, ongoing challenges, and ultimately, how London can foster a supportive and inclusive environment for all. The day consisted of a keynote address around populism and belonging by Debbie Douglas - CEO of Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, a panel on experiences of discrimination, another keynote address around how and why Indigenous-specific racism is maintained in Canada by Gertie Mai Muisse - CEO of Indigenous Primary Health Care Council, and lastly facilitated roundtable discussions with event attendees.

The purpose of the facilitated roundtable discussions was to stimulate progressive discourse, brainstorm recommendations/strategies, and ultimately, address two overarching questions that were echoed throughout the day:

- 1. How do we combat discrimination and racism?**
- 2. How do we foster social integration and inclusion?**

To successfully take a stand against discrimination and racism in the city of London, specific factors need to be addressed as they play out at different levels of society. Hence, the roundtables were categorized into three levels: individual, organization, and community. With 15 roundtables in total, five tables were assigned to each level to ensure there was diverse conversation and rich substance captured in this report. By creating level-specific recommendations that can be followed, the public can combat discrimination and racism at all intersections of society, targeting both structural/systemic factors and individual day-to-day outcomes.

The overall objective of this summary report is to consolidate the roundtable discussion findings into actionable strategies that can be utilized by the public to respond, advocate, support, and help build effective anti-discrimination and anti-racism practice at the individual, organizational, and community levels in the city of London.



## Recommendations

Below is a synthesized list of the strategies retrieved from the roundtable discussions, sectioned off into their specific level. Each section outlines the specific questions used to prompt dialogue, thematically summarizes the wholesome discussion into actionable points, and includes explanations that put the recommendations into context.

### INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

At the **individual level**, the following questions were put forward:

- a. What can people do as individuals to combat ethnic, racial, and religious discrimination when they experience or observe it?
- b. What are specific behaviours that can be enacted when one is a target of discrimination? What can one do?
- c. How can bystanders provide support to targets of discrimination? What are specific behaviours that they can perform in order to support target and/or prevent the behaviour from continuing?

- **Provide support and demonstrate empathy for victims of discrimination and racism.**

Being supportive and present to the person experiencing discrimination is important. Be a friend, offer an ear: listen to the individual's stories. Ask them how you can help them. The emphasis should be on helping the victim, rather than fighting the perpetrator.

- **Be aware of everyday microaggressions rooted in racism and discrimination.**

Microaggressions are often overlooked in our day-to-day lives. Whether these behaviours are intentional or not, they stem from racist ideas, and it is imperative to point out how microaggressions are problematic. With that being said, POC (People Of Colour) explain that it is emotionally and mentally draining to assume full responsibility to educate others on every occurrence; this is where allies can come into play.

- **Keep an open mind, continuously learn/unlearn, and lead by example from a compassionate standpoint.**

Start with yourself: self-education. Though it may not be possible to change others immediately, you can learn, transform yourselves, and lead by example.

- **Be mindful of your own biases and prejudices, and how they shape your opinions of others.**

Check your biases when you approach different environments, what assumptions do you bring to this particular situation? What stereotypes are you entertaining? Ask yourself these tough questions and engage in critical self-reflection.

- **Intervene as a bystander and take action to denounce racist behaviour, don't allow complacency.**

Depending on the context of the situation, it may be safe to step in, de-escalate the situation, and call the act out for what it is. Other times, it may be better to call the authorities for help. In either instance, the bystander is taking action to denounce racist behaviour and creating a norm that hateful behaviour is not acceptable. Though bystanders cannot necessarily control other individuals' beliefs, they can prevent others from discriminating against others based on their beliefs. Never give up, always stand up for your rights and others' rights.

- **Recognize the privilege you hold and strive to act as an ally to individuals being targeted.**

Acknowledge the privilege you hold in the spaces you enter. Take a stance, this can be done by voting for someone who can create positive change politically. Be mindful as an ally. Solidarity is always appreciated and respected, but any sign of a 'saviour complex' needs to be addressed.

### ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

At the **organizational level**, the following questions were put forward:

- a. What can be done at the organizational level to prevent discrimination?
- b. What types of organizational policies and policies can be established to reduce discrimination?
- c. How can organizations advocate for change?

- **Organizations need to set safe practices to receive input and feedback from individuals about creating an inclusive, culturally safe environment.**

People tend to feel uncomfortable and fear that consequences may arise if they speak out against others in an organization. To counter this power imbalance, organizations need to have a safe practice in place to receive input and feedback from individuals to create a genuinely culturally safe, inclusive environment. This may mean having different modes of hearing from people at the company, both anonymous and not.

- **Offer educational cultural competency courses and ensure HR/management are trained.**

HR/Management must be trained in cultural competency, while educational courses should also be offered to individuals throughout the organization. Professional development in this area will raise awareness to gaps within the organization and at the same time, will encourage a workplace culture grounded in support and respect. This, in turn, will foster social inclusion and an overall safe environment.

- **Review organizational policies and hiring practices through an equity lens, consult with experts.**

Organizational policies and hiring practices need to be revisited and re-evaluated to ensure they align with anti-discrimination & anti-racism practice. It may also be a good idea to consult with external experts trained in such practice to ensure this is done appropriately. These documents should always be made accessible to all, demonstrating the organization's transparency and accountability to this matter.

- **Hold organizations accountable by developing evaluation tools to measure actionable change towards diversity and inclusion.**

Though much conversation is typically generated around implementation of new organizational policies and practices, it is just as important to measure the actionable change that is occurring. Developing evaluation tools to measure such progress holds organizations accountable. These numbers can then be reported and made accessible for others to see, thereby promoting other organizations to also step up and do their part.

- **Engage in critical reflection as an organization and allow for external community assessment/criticism.**

Organizations in the community represent the society we are living in. Therefore, organizations can be mandated to engage in critical reflection and make space for individuals to raise concerns around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Accepting and legitimizing concerns from external community members and internal organizational members sets a tone within the organization; it shows that the organization is serious about making a difference and advocating for change.

### COMMUNITY LEVEL

At the **community level**, the following questions were put forward:

- a. What can we do as a community to combat ethnic, racial, and religious discrimination in our community?
- b. What types of deterrents and incentives can be put into place to counter discriminatory behaviour at the community level?
- c. How do we make our communities more inclusive?

- **Have signs translated in different languages at public places as a testament to truly reflect the diverse community in London.**

Showcasing signs in different languages symbolizes the appreciation of harmony and diversity in a public space. This also signifies London's commitment to inclusion and social integration, while also acting as an authentic representation of how London is truly rich in diversity.

- **Start conversations with children at home, be cognizant of what they are exposed to in the media, and answer their questions. Children are the future leaders of society and the seeds of change.**

Our homes and families make up our community. Be aware of what children are exposed to in the media, talk to them about what they see – the good and the bad. Difficult conversations need to take place at home with our children, the future leaders of our society. Attitudes and behaviours can be propagated for generations. Thus, we need to teach children empathy and respect, and embed within them the message that diversity is beautiful.

- **Enforce societal norms and rules in public spaces that require acting in a respectful, culturally sensitive manner.**

Societal norms can be enforced in public spaces to safeguard spaces from individuals who perpetuate hateful attitudes and behaviours. By asking someone to leave when they do not maintain respect for others, this sends a message to the rest of society that we do not stand for any kind of behaviour rooted in hate, racism, and discrimination.

- **Hold community building events to bring people from different backgrounds together, have open dialogue, learn about different cultures, and celebrate one another.**

Community building events allow for everyone to participate with the purpose of bringing everyone together and celebrating each other's similarities and differences. These events can also present opportunities to educate the larger community about different religions, cultures, and backgrounds. Cultural gatherings and festivals organized by different groups within the larger community can also be another way to shine a light on the rich diversity in the city of London.

- **Rethink community partnerships and bridge the gap between different groups of people, cannot advance change by working in silos.**

Smaller communities need to step outside their comfort zone to work together and bridge gaps between different groups. Change cannot be achieved by working in silos. Partnerships can connect individuals of different cultures together and everyone can learn from one another. At the community level, change can be integrated in a much larger impact, if done in partnership.

- **Appreciate the richness of diversity and allow for spaces to have tough conversations with the community.**

Public forums, community gatherings, and other events for the city of London are a prerequisite to a strong community growing together. Having tough conversations in a safe space help us better understand the challenges and successes we are enabling as a community. These daily check-ins and open dialogues are an effective way to combat racism and discrimination within the community.

## Next Steps

The complex, fulfilling roundtable discussions that took place at the All Are Welcome Here Event signify London's commitment to combating discrimination and racism at all three levels: individual, organization, and community. Though much rich discussion has come out of these roundtables, this is not an exhaustive list of all that must be done to ensure progress within the city of London. We are hopeful that the actionable strategies synthesized above can be a great starting from which people can respond, advocate, and help build effective anti-discrimination and anti-racist practice at the different levels of society. We thank all those who attended the roundtable sessions to voice their opinions, share their concerns, and help build London into a more inclusive, culturally safe space for everyone.

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