

## March 21 2010 Campaign

CRC organized its 17th annual public awareness campaign throughout the month of March 2010. The campaign was held in partnership with the City of Edmonton, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Racism Free Edmonton initiative. The campaign featured two large commemoration ceremonies, including a dinner gala for invited members of the public and a school event in partnership with Sir John Thompson Junior High School. There were 15 additional anti-racism initiatives in Edmonton.

The generous commitment of Citizenship & Immigration Canada means that many thousands of people heard the message that racism remains a serious problem in our society and reminded them that we all need to work toward its elimination.

March 21, 2010 Campaign

2010 Event Pictures

Keynote Speech by Tina Lopes

2010 Program of Activities > Summary

History of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

March 21 is the designated International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this important day of the year, many groups consolidate their efforts in the fight against racism. March 21 is a day where we honour the struggle against racism and bring public awareness to this struggle. A wide variety of organizations -- including CRC and many of its members -- get involved in March 21 campaigns to bring awareness to the elimination of racism. Schools, post-secondary institutions, ethno-cultural organizations, community groups and religious groups all contribute their diverse methods of educating the public about causes of and solutions to racism.

An important aspect of the March 21 campaign is youths' contributions and participation in the anti-racist and multicultural activities. Young people not only make presentations and perform at March 21 events, but they also take part in the organizing and implementation of these events.

March 21 activities include commemorative ceremonies, public forums, workshops and conferences. Through discussion, information and participation, people taking part in March 21 events increase their awareness about racism.

An effective aspect of March 21 events is that participants can take what they learn back to their communities, families, friends and workplaces, and create awareness about racism and its solutions among others. In fact, we see this domino-effect of anti-racism occur year after year through projects that outreach to Alberta communities. For example, during March 21, a group of youth hosted a radio talk show series about issues relating to racism. Following the talk show series and other March 21 events, teachers and students in Francophone schools undertook a project to develop resources and methods of dealing with racism.

Year after year, March 21 activities prove to be a highlight in CRC's calendar of events and successes.

Program Summary

Culture from the Ground Up - Edmonton Young Offender Centre

Your Identity, Your Heritage

Collective Poetry

Art Poster Contest

Poetry Contest : 'I am what I am'

Digital Storytelling

Guest Speakers

Cultures Game

Free Yourself! 16th Annual MacEwan University March 21 Campaign

Human Library

Tsholo Khalema

Library Displays

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination - Baby Picture Student Project

Dr. Mark Mathabane Lecture

White Privilege Postering Campaign

Awareness Campaign  
Under the African Sky - Siyawela Foundation  
Speaking Out Against Racism Through Words: Anti-racism Poetry Workshop

The Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage  
The Aboriginal Perspective on Human Rights in Alberta

Aboriginal Commission on Human Rights and Justice  
Free Yourself - School Event

The Centre for Race and Culture and Sir John Thompson Junior High School  
Celebrating Edmonton's Muslim Women - Edmonton Arts Council  
Edmonton Interfaith Centre Prayer Service for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination -  
Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action  
Say No to Racism and Yes to Diversity - Alliance Jeunesse - Famille de l'Alberta Society  
Safe Harbor: Respect for All

Safe Harbour: Respect for All and the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, HRSDC's Racism Free Workplace Strategy, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Centre for Race & Culture (formerly Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations), and City of Edmonton, Diversity & Inclusion Office  
Free Yourself - Dinner Gala

Centre for Race and Culture (formerly NAARR) and City of Edmonton Racism Free Edmonton (RFE) Initiative  
2010 Harmony Brunch - Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation  
Living Colors Unite - Creating Hope Society  
Beyond Our Walls - City of Grande Prairie Family and Community Support Services  
Step Up For Diversity: See, Judge, Act - Edmonton Immigrant Services Association  
Refugee, Immigrant, and Canadian-born Students in Edmonton Speak about Anti-Oppression, Community Building, and Civic Participation

The University of Calgary Social Work, African Canadian Community Association of Edmonton and Imani Africa  
Keynote Speech  
by Tina Lopes

Acknowledge with gratitude the Cree, Metis and other First Nations peoples whose land we are on, and welcome the Aboriginal Elders and elected Leaders present here this evening.  
I'd like to thank the Centre for Race and Culture for inviting me to speak with you this evening, as we celebrate the U.N. Designated International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

I had the extraordinary privilege of spending the day today with FNMIINS and racialized peoples who gathered to talk about our distinct experiences of racism and how we can stand in solidarity with each other to challenge racism in Edmonton.

In preparation for that day, three First Nations and Metis people and five racialized people worked to design the day and facilitated the process today. All of them acknowledged that the Centre for Race and Culture has been pivotal as a place to discuss issues of racism, develop a sense of community with others who wish to challenge racism, and build the skills needed to carry out this important work. I think we should applaud the Centre for Race and Culture and all the people who work there for their fine work.

Racism is not an issue that has come about in recent years due to immigration; it has been a part of the establishment of this nation and has impacted FNMIINS people for hundred of years. It has also shaped the lives of racialized people, both those who have been here for generations and those who have arrived here more recently.

I imagine all of you are here because you are committed to addressing and eradicating racism in your own work and life, and wish to support others who are seeking to do the same. This support of each others' efforts is essential - none of us can do this work alone.

If Edmonton is to become a city free of racism it will require a wide-spread, whole hearted collaboration among people, groups and organizations that do not always see eye to eye, or know how to successfully work together.

Huge challenge - how do we build on the desire to address racism and overcome the divides that often weaken our efforts to do so.

Maybe worthwhile examining some of the reasons we don't always agree with each other, and seek stronger common ground.

All of us may agree that it is important to deal with racism, but we may not all agree on what racism is, or what it means to challenge it.

Explore some of the difference:

a) some people believe racism is bad behaviour by a few bad apples, that only a few highly prejudiced people are racist, and that they should be stopped.

They would be shunned by the majority of society, which is fair and open.

While nobody approves of overt forms of racism, this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Those who have studied racism for years know that it is well beyond the actions of a few individuals.

It is a reality that defines the life opportunities of FNMI peoples and racialized peoples here in Canada.

Studies done in the last ten years demonstrate that the poverty rate of racial minorities is nearly double that of the rest of the population. White immigrant groups also experience inequality but not nearly to the same extent.

b) another source of division - some people think racism is human nature and that if we provide information about each other cultures - food, holidays, celebrations, we'll get along better.

While gatherings like this are an important way of building a community of people who will fight racism together, they are not enough to tackle racism.

The Multiculturalism policy hoped that they would. While it may be enjoyable to learn more about what we like to eat, how we celebrate and what we have achieved in music and art, this did not change the racial inequities that exist in employment, housing, education and the justice system.

If we are to work together as FNMI peoples, racialized and white people, we need to deal honestly with some of the more sticky issues that underlie racism because they keep us apart from each other and deprive us of the strength and comfort that comes of being able to draw on each other and to live our lives more in unison with each other.

We need to have the courage to examine how FNMI peoples and racialized people have been divided against each other. The facilitators who led the work during the day today have begun that work here in Edmonton.

It is hard work. Those of us who came here from afar learned very quickly the stereotypes that exist and persist about FNMI peoples here in Canada - common myths - don't pay taxes, get everything for free, are to blame for hardships in their communities.

Some FNMI people have talked about how they too have come to believe the negative stories about immigrants that fill the media, government statements and social gossip - they're taking away our jobs,

We need to come together to learn about each other's experiences of racism and to discern how they are similar and how they are different. This is the necessary foundation for coming together in unity to challenge racism.

c) another issue that keeps us apart is the discomfort many of us have with the naming of white privilege. It is an important concept for white people who want to end racism to come to grips with, and many of you have.

White privilege does not suggest that every white person is a bad person and personally to blame for racism. It is saying that racism works in ways that give certain advantages to white people, and disadvantage FNMI and racialized peoples for reasons that have nothing to do with how hard people work, how much education they have or other factors to do with merit.

For example, racism perpetuates the notion the white people are Canadians and that all racialized people are all immigrants, even though there have been racialized people on this land from the beginning of the histories told in our text books.

The legal system does assume innocence until guilt is proven for white people, but this is not true for racialized and FNMI peoples.

When organizations are hiring or promoting people, it is common to hear comments to the effect that the white candidate is always the most competent, and the FNMI or racialized person who got the job did so because of some equity initiative or because the organization is "lowering its standards."

Over the decades many white people have seen this dynamic and worked to challenge this unfair but persistent dynamic in our organizations and in society. They have been good allies. They have been willing to challenge the forms of privilege that they are given, and to work to change this reality. Instead of asking why all the racialized students are sitting together in the classroom or lunch room, they ask why white people are doing the same, but nobody seems to notice. It really helps the process when our white allies work with us to examine white privilege and to ally with us. Important to be clear about what is at stake for us as we do this difficult work. Edmonton is experiencing a labour shortage, and Canada as a whole needs immigrants to come and work here if we are to maintain our industries and productivity.

More and more I am hearing from racialized people who are deciding not to stay. Young Korean woman who fought for social justice in Korea came here as a student...she is so disheartened by the racism here that she is thinking about returning to Korea rather than continue to experience racism here in Canada.

Think about a person that matters to you and keep them in mind when you lose heart in the battle. Ending racism is hard work - need to remember why we do it and for whom."

2010 Event Pictures

March 21 marks the anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre (1960) in South Africa when police opened fire on hundreds of peaceful demonstrators against Apartheid's passbook laws. Police killed 67 demonstrators and wounded 186. In 1966, the United Nations declared March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in memory of this tragedy. In 1989, Canada showed support for the UN declaration by becoming the first country in the world to promote a March 21 Campaign. As a result, March 21 has become a national focal point for raising awareness and involving Canadians in the movement against racism. Contact CRC for more information.