



# *Rising Up!* An Anti-Racism Report

Prepared for: New Westminster Spokes Committee

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to recognize, honour, and thank the Qayqayt First Nation, as well as all Coast Salish peoples, on whose traditional and unceded lands, from time immemorial, we learn, work, create, live, and breathe on. We are all visitors on these sacred lands.

I am very thankful to Janet Goosney at the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and the New Westminster Spokes Committee members for your wonderful support and guidance in the Rising Up! Anti-Racism Project.

Most importantly, this report could not have been written without the people, the community members of the different cultural, faith, Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities in New Westminster who graciously gave up their time and energy by participating in the cultural cafes, interviews, and community survey. By opening up your minds and hearts, you shared your emotional, traumatic, and courageous experiences of racism and discrimination with me, for this I am deeply grateful and this report is dedicated to all of you. May you all continue to *Rise Up!*

*Thank you/Shukriya!*

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The world is presently at an unprecedented moment in time where it sits precariously at a tipping point with the pandemic wreaking havoc on the healthcare system, natural catastrophes warning us of irreversible climate danger, and racial strife stretching itself across these lands. These crises have further unveiled the racist reality that the people who are most impacted by the health, climate and racial emergencies are Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples and communities. Sadly, these communities of colour often do not have the funds and resources to uplift themselves out of these dire circumstances while privileged White communities seem to be better off and safer in these times of uncertainty. Only by recognizing and deeply understanding how colonization, and individual, institutional and systemic racism are keeping communities of colour oppressed and divided in these times of emergencies, is the first step to acknowledging the long road ahead of decolonization and truth and reconciliation. Before this journey begins, one needs to hear from the people, the people with voices and lived experiences who know this road intimately and fearlessly.

It is the intention of the Rising Up! project to illuminate and shine the torchlights of truth on the realities of racism and discrimination in New Westminster by providing a platform for cultural, faith and Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC) communities to rise up and speak their voices, minds, and hearts. It was an invitation for members of these diverse communities to participate in culturally appropriate community engagement where they could safely and courageously speak about how racism and discrimination has impacted their personal, professional, religious and community lives. There were 65 community members who participated in the community and cultural engagement through a series of cultural cafes, interviews and a community survey. By listening to the authentic narratives of the myriad of cultural, faith, and Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples in New Westminster, the key findings of these collective voices were categorized into five themes: *1) racism is real, raw and ravaging; 2) workplace discrimination and racism; 3) intercultural discrimination and racism; 4) public spaces and safety; and 5) mental health and racism.*

By sharing their stories and lived experiences, the community and cultural engagement phase also provided community members with the opportunity to make key recommendations on how racism and discrimination can be addressed in cultural, faith, and IBPOC communities in New Westminster. These collective recommendations focused on five areas for decolonizing and anti-racism work in the city: *1) Role of the City; 2) Language and communication; 3) Public Education; 4) Cultural and Intercultural Initiatives; and 5) Anti-Racism Initiatives.*

It is with great respect and honour that members from a multitude of Indigenous, Black and racialized communities were able to feel safe enough to share their inner and outer experiences of racism and discrimination in the community engagement phase. This is a symbol of their strength, determination and commitment to making communities safer, inclusive, welcoming and vibrant throughout New Westminster.

The community and cultural engagement phase is one of the most important processes of any community project as it can be called the “people phase” where the silenced voices in the shadows are able to rise up and speak their truths out loud. This Rising Up! project was essentially a project to amplify the “voices of the voiceless” in the cultural, faith, Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities in New Westminster and provide them with a platform to speak their “truths to power.” *They have spoken, and they have risen.*

## INTRODUCTION

*“Where do you begin telling someone their world is not the only one?”*

Lee Maracle

We are living in a world and time where cities and communities locally and globally are facing a health emergency, a climate emergency and a racial emergency. It is the racial emergency that we must shine the torchlights of truths upon and recognize that a war on race has been going on in Canada since the early days of colonialization and continues today. What makes today different though, is that the past has finally caught up to the present. In 2021, a national tragedy and shame rose up from the depths of the past as hundreds of unmarked graves of Indigenous children’s bones were discovered at residential school sites across the country. It took an initial 215 unmarked graves to prove that the war on race has always been here, but the problem was, it was never deemed a racial emergency. With the unravelling of dark colonial secrets and public displays of murder and violence towards Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples, the atrocities of white supremacy and white privilege in Canada are now being uncovered and highlighted for the world to see that Canada is not the country it claims to be. Canada cannot wear the façade of being a country of “peace” anymore, as it now must come to a national and honest reckoning by looking at itself in the mirror and understand that its past is still actually its present, and to finally wake up and realize that from colonialism to white supremacy, there is indeed a state of racial emergency in the cities across this country.

This racial emergency can be seen in the recent rise of racism and hate crimes that are being committed covertly in the shadows and out overtly in the daylight across every Canadian city. We know that no city can escape racism as it roams in schools, businesses, public spaces, and governments in the forms of individual, institutional, structural, and systemic racism. In 2020 we saw the city of Vancouver experience an increase of over 700% in hate crimes targeting Asian people due to the racial profiling of the pandemic. In the same year we witnessed land defenders of the Wet'suwet'en movement being racially harassed for protecting Indigenous land, environmental, and cultural rights and this struggle continues today. How do we move forward in times when deep mistrust and fear lurks in communities of colour and when systemic racism, white supremacy and white privilege are the creators of this oppression in the first place. One of the first steps on the road to racial justice is to first acknowledge that a racial emergency exists in our cities and that the paths forward are ones of anti-racism and decolonization with Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples leading the way with new ways of *knowing, being, and doing*, an Indigenous teaching to us all.

Community-based planning and participatory planning approaches can encourage and embolden the voices hidden in the shadows, such as cultural, faith and IBPOC communities, to be centered as the experts and knowledge bearers of the issues and concerns of their own communities. Reaching out to cultural, faith and IBPOC communities through a community and cultural engagement process is one way to listen and learn from the voices that are not often heard in city and community processes and initiatives. This anti-racism project focuses on conducting a culturally appropriate community engagement process to hear from individuals and representatives of diverse communities on their issues and insights on racism and discrimination.

The *Rising Up!* project involves a community engagement process where cultural, faith and IBPOC communities have a respectful platform to speak about their truths and experiences on racism and hate.

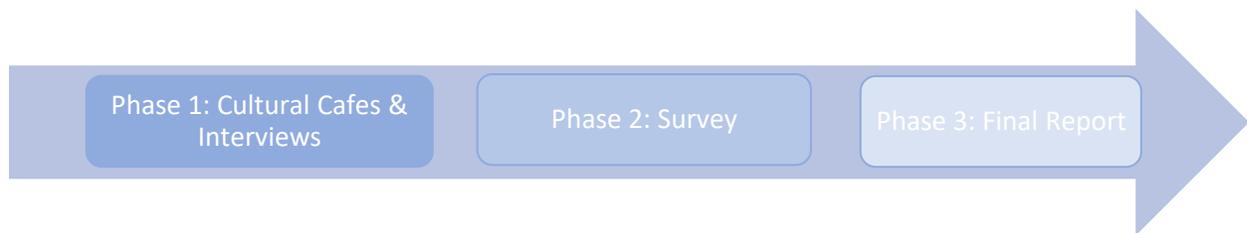
### Project Deliverables

The main objective of the *Rising Up!* project is to amplify the voices of the cultural, faith and IBPOC communities in New Westminster by conducting a community and cultural engagement phase with the following four project deliverables:

- 1) *Conduct cultural cafes and interviews with members from cultural, faith and IBPOC communities to listen and document their lived experiences of racism and discrimination;*
- 2) *Send out a community survey to hear the concerns and barriers of racism and discrimination by community members;*
- 3) *Garner solutions and recommendations for anti-racism and community initiatives through the cultural cafes, interviews and community survey; and*
- 4) *Synthesize the results and key findings from the cultural cafes, interviews, and survey into a final report.*

### Project Methodology

The Rising Up! Project was conducted in three project phases that were completed over a period of approximately four months:



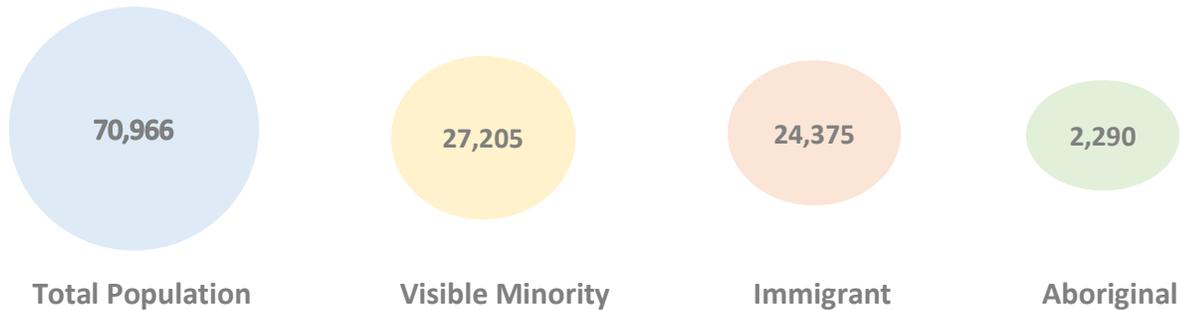
The Rising Up! project is part of Phase II of the New Westminster Spokes Committee Anti-Racism Project. Phase I consisted of a community needs assessment and environmental scan of anti-racism work being conducted by community, government and education sectors in New Westminster. Phase I also culminated into the writing of a final report entitled “Checking the Pulse.” The Phase II of the Rising Up! project involves a community and cultural engagement phase where the voices of Indigenous, Black and racialized people in New Westminster were able to speak their truths, out loud.

According to the truths of one community member in New Westminster:

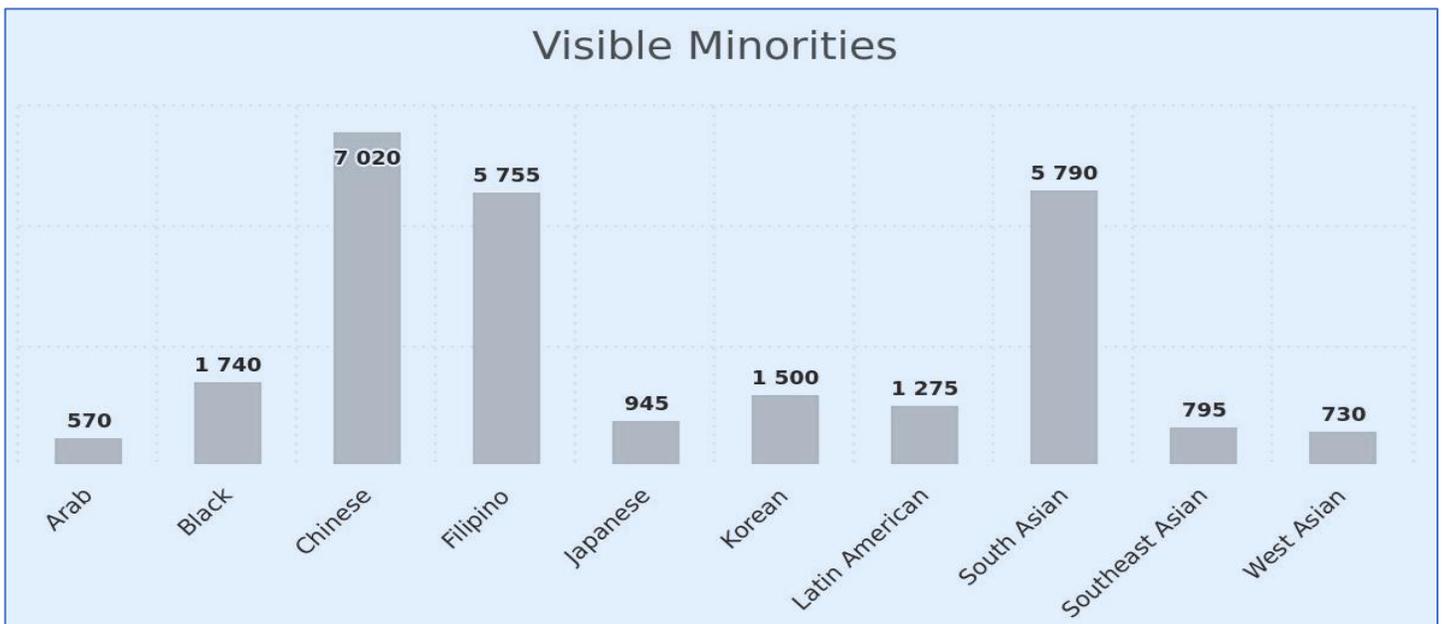
*“We are thankful with the immigration laws of Canada. However, Canada on paper is much better than it is on the ground. Feeling a sense of belonging requires respect and dignity. Currently we are forced to see ourselves as a slave rather than a citizen.”*

## COMMUNITY PROFILE OF NEW WESTMINSTER

The city of New Westminster is a jewel of diversity as it is home to the Qayqayt Nation and a myriad of cultural, faith, and Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities. Today, diverse footsteps are still arriving on the shores of New Westminster and finding their ways into ethno-culturally diverse neighborhoods such as Queensborough. When meandering up and down the streets of New Westminster, one sees the visibility of diversity within the faces, businesses and communities throughout the city, with women wearing hijabs, and communities of colour finding welcome and refuge in a smattering of ethnic cafes. According to Statistics Canada (2016), this richness in diversity is evident in New Westminster’s population breakdown with a total population of 70,996, an Aboriginal population of 2,290 individuals (3.3% of the population), a visible minority population numbered at 27,205 (38.5% of the population), and an immigrant population of 24,375 (34.5% of the population).



This fabric of vibrant diversity in New Westminster further consists of distinct threads of racial, ethnic and linguistic groups in the visible minority population and the Aboriginal/Indigenous population, as illustrated in the next two diagrams.



Visible Minorities Breakdown  
Source: Townfolio (2016)



Aboriginal Identification Breakdown  
Source: Townfolio (2016)

The objective of the Rising Up! project is to conduct culturally appropriate community engagement with cultural, faith, and Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities and groups in New Westminster. Through the literature review and engagement phase, it was identified that there are a few cultural, faith, and IBPOC groups located in New Westminster, as listed below:

#### Faith

- Gurdwara Sahib Sukh Sagar (*Sikh community*)
- Miskay Hizunan Medhanialem & Tsedenia Kidist Mariam Church (*Ethiopian/African community*)
- Redeemed Christian Church of God (*African community*)
- Freedom Fire Full Gospel (*Filipino community*)
- Vancouver Korea Seventh Day Adventist Church (*Korean community*)
- Makarios Evangelical Church (*Chinese community*)
- The Vancouver Japanese Gospel Church (*Japanese community*)
- Vancouver Vietnamese Alliance Church (*Vietnamese community*)
- Shiloh-Sixth Avenue United Church (*Jewish community*)
- Queensborough Musallah Mosque (*Muslim community*)

#### Cultural

- Qayqayt Nation (*Indigenous community*)
- Spirit of the Children Society (*Indigenous community*)
- Khalsa Diwan Society (*Punjabi/Sikh community*)
- Korean Cultural Heritage Society (*Korean community*)
- Centre of Integration of African Immigrants (*African community*)
- New Westminster Islamic Society (*Middle East/Arab/Muslim community*)

#### IBPOC

- New West Pride (*LGBTQ2S+ community*)
- Douglas College (*Youth community*)

A key component of community projects is to conduct community engagement processes where local community members are invited to participate in constructive dialogues that lead to the betterment of their communities and cities. Involving community members and their voices in the planning, implementing and evaluating of community projects is called participatory planning and community-based planning. Simply put, community members know their problems, they know their community solutions, and they want to be active and participate in community mobilization around issues such as, racism, hate and discrimination. It is platforms such as community engagement processes where marginalized and vulnerable voices can feel safer and more comfortable to share their lived experiences and reflections on the devastating harms of racism as well as the healing that needs to take place.

**“Community engagement encourages the emergence of more active citizens. Active citizens are a great untapped resource.”**

Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary

## Decolonizing with Culturally Appropriate Engagement

The Brazilian critical thinker Paulo Freire in his book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” highlighted the need for participatory action research and inquiry-based learning in communities of colour so that community injustices and concerns could be voiced and understood by the oppressed at a grassroots local level. He talked about the importance of creative platforms such as arts and culture in playing key roles to engage with residents on racial, social, cultural, environmental and political issues. Through creative engagement styles such as community theatre and cultural cafes, community members can feel more comfortable in sharing and discussing their concerns and recommendations within spaces that are democratizing and non-threatening. For many reasons traditional routes of community engagement have not worked as these engagement processes are often created through a colonial European lens without an understanding of the lived realities of Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples. The need to decolonize the current western way of conducting engagement processes is critical in order to effectively reach out to those on the margins such as cultural, faith and IBPOC communities and their members.

One way to decolonize community engagement processes is to create opportunities for community dialogue through culturally appropriate measures that are respectful and mindful of community needs and vulnerabilities. These cultural engagement styles include meeting community members where they are at, which may mean conducting meetings in coffee shops, parks and religious spaces – essentially going to where

*“Oppressed people can regain their humanity in the struggle for liberation, but only if that struggle is led by oppressed people”*

(Paulo Freire)

the community members feel their most comfortable and safe. Another decolonial tool necessary in dismantling community engagement processes is to hire and retain consultants and firms who are led and comprised by staff from IBPOC communities as they have the direct lived experiences of racism, hate and oppression which greatly enriches and adds authenticity to equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism projects. Also, by developing creative and artistic engagement processes, we can decolonize the structured colonial way of undertaking community engagement which is highly formal and institutional, and create more informal and grassroots oriented community dialogue on racism and discrimination. People are often more relaxed and comfortable in their own community and cultural spaces to share their truths and lived experiences. It is in the most informal spaces, where the greatest conversations actually take place.

## Voices from the Shadows: Cultural, Faith, and IBPOC Communities

This project focuses on respecting and amplifying the voices from the shadows in New Westminster which are cultural, faith, and Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities. Hence, it was vital to create a community and cultural engagement process which made a concerted effort to specifically reach out to these cultural, faith, and IBPOC groups and their representatives and create a trusting environment to bring out their voices into the light on racism and discrimination. As New Westminster is a city weaved of many racial, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious threads, this project highlights unique cultural community experiences on racism as well as raising communal recommendations on how to better serve the needs of the city's diverse cultural, faith and IBPOC communities.

As mentioned in the community profile section of this report, the city of New Westminster is home to many cultural and ethnic communities and as a result it was important to actively attempt to reach out to as many of these communities as possible in the community and cultural engagement phase. In the end, the Consultant was able to interview and connect with 65 people who participated either through the cultural cafes, interviews or community survey for the Rising Up! project. It is important to note that the 65 people who participated in the community and cultural engagement phase generally identify with the following demographic communities/groupings:

- Indigenous, Metis, Inuit
- East Asian
- South Asian
- Southeast Asian
- Latin American
- Arab
- Middle Eastern
- African
- Caribbean
- Black
- Bi-racialized, Multi-racialized
- European
- LGBTQ2S+/IBPOC
- People with a Disability/IBPOC
- Youth/IBPOC
- Seniors/IBPOC

When discussing the topic of race, it is also important to mention intersectionality where one person has a few intersecting identifies, for example one participant may be a Bi-racialized woman with a disability. For this project, there were 54 participants in the cultural cafes and interviews who identified with one of the communities/groupings above, and in the community survey there were 11 participants with a few of these participants identifying with intersecting identities. Thus, there are 65 people who participated in the engagement processes with a few participants identifying with intersecting identities thereby increasing the number of demographic groupings of the participants to 72, as illustrated on the following page.

## Engagement through Cultural Cafes, Interviews & Survey

At the beginning of the project, the Consultant reached out directly to a variety of cultural, faith, and IBPOC communities in New Westminster to inform community members of the Rising Up! project and its community and cultural engagement phase. The Consultant also contacted the members of the New Westminster Spokes Committee to request their organizations and agencies to send out invites to their IBPOC clients and contacts to participate in the cultural cafes, interviews and community survey. Research was also conducted through a light environmental scan to find out which cultural, faith and IBPOC groups are located in New Westminster in order to invite these groups to participate in the engagement sessions.

For the community and cultural engagement phase, it was important to break down the data into race-based and geographical-based groupings amongst the participants, and provide a snapshot of the faces and backgrounds of the participants who contributed to the engagement findings, as illustrated in the diagram below.



Note: Total number of groupings = 72 (with intersectional identities)

The engagement data revealed that the majority of people who participated in the community and cultural engagement phase identify as members of the South Asian, Latin American and Southeast Asian communities. The following information provides a more specific breakdown on the number of participants who identify with certain cultural communities and who were part of the cultural cafes and interviews:

- *Latin American community = 11 participants*
- *Pakistani community = 8 participants*
- *African/Black/Caribbean community = 7 participants*
- *Filipino community = 7 participants*
- *East Asian community = 7 participants*
- *Punjabi community = 5 participants*
- *Indigenous community = 4 participants*
- *Arab/Middle East community = 3 participants*

The majority of people who participated in the engagement phase either live, work, or study in New Westminster and there were less than 10 participants who were situated in other municipalities but still wanted to contribute to this project.

### Cultural Cafes

The concept of cultural cafes is to gather people in a café style setting to discuss issues and learn from each other and different knowledge bases. The advantage of this type of community engagement is it allows people to meet in non-institutional and non-threatening spaces where discussion flows in more trusting and interesting ways. For this project, the Consultant conducted a series of cultural cafes over a week in New Westminster that were held in-person, with one cultural cafe via zoom, at different locations throughout the city. These cultural cafes focused on the following cultural, faith and IBPOC communities in New Westminster which expressed interest in attending these cafes: *Punjabi Community, Filipino Community, Pakistani Community, Latin American Community, IBPOC Youth Community, Diverse Seniors Community, Diverse Families Community and Diverse Newcomers Community.*

Some of the agencies which directly supported and assisted in organizing these cultural cafes are Family Services, ISS, MOSAIC, Lower Mainland Purpose Society, Douglas College, New West Pride, Burnaby Pride, and Century House (City of New Westminster). There were 41 people who participated in these cultural cafes throughout various venues across the city.

### Interviews

Another community and cultural engagement tool that is commonly used in eliciting information is the traditional concept of interviews. For this project, the Consultant conducted a series of interviews with members from cultural, faith and IBPOC communities in New Westminster. Some interviews were conducted in-person and other interviews were carried out on the zoom platform. The advantage of a one on one interview is that it provides the participant with dedicated time to fully share their experiences and reflections on racism without being interrupted or distracted. There were 13 people who participated in the interviews.

## Community Survey

A survey is a convenient and user friendly tool that is often utilized in community engagement processes where participants can fill out information and questions at their own pace and ability. In this project, a community survey was sent out via the platform of Survey Monkey with a short list of open ended questions to allow for more feedback and points of reflection. The survey link was also shared with agencies in New Westminster who posted the survey out on their social media platforms. There were 11 people who participated in the community survey.

## Engagement Questions

For the Rising Up! Anti-Racism Project there were three pivotal engagement questions which were posed to participants in the cultural cafes, interviews and survey. The Consultant chose only three questions to ensure that the participants would not be overwhelmed with questions especially ones that relate to racism and hate, at individual and community levels, as these are often challenging, emotional, and traumatic conversations to participate in. The three questions which were asked consistently throughout the cultural cafes, interviews and survey in the engagement phase are:

1) *What main issues around discrimination and racism are you and your community facing in New Westminster?*

2) *How are you and your community specifically addressing discrimination and racism?*

3) *What anti-hate and anti-racism initiatives are further needed to better support the needs of you and your community?*

When the community engagement phase of a project involves community-based and active participation by community members, this leads to authentic, diverse and informed voices being an integral part of important community dialogues such as, racism and discrimination. The Rising Up! project was an invitation to members of cultural, faith and IBPOC communities in New Westminster to participate in a community and cultural engagement phase where they could safely and courageously share how racism impacted their personal, professional and religious lives. Captured through cultural cafes, interviews and a community survey, community members/participants were able to voice and share the realities of racism in their lives and communities. These engagement findings have been documented, analyzed and categorized into **five key themes** highlighting the voices, stories and lived experiences which were expressed by community members: *1) Racism is Real, Raw and Ravaging; 2) Workplace Racism and Discrimination; 3) Intercultural Racism and Discrimination; 4) Public Spaces and Safety; and 5) Racism and Mental Health.*

Let the truths be told, in the story's below.

### Racism is Real, Raw and Ravaging

Through the community and cultural engagement phase, it was echoed loud and clear by members of the Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities that racism is real, whether covert or overt, in New Westminster. It is a racial emergency that has gone under the radar and as one community member said we need to *"get our heads out of the sand"* as racism is here, in the city of New Westminster. With close to 40% of the City's population identifying with visible minority, immigrant and IBPOC groups, this makes New Westminster a place of refuge for people of different racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. This strong representation of diversity in the city has unfortunately also brought out more acts of racism and hate to surface in communities across New Westminster. The findings from the cultural cafes, interviews and community survey highlighted that racism is real, raw and ravaging for Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples and communities in New Westminster as evident by the following stories and lived experiences.

- It was identified that "hidden racism" or "racism in the shadows" is everywhere in New Westminster as many community members commented that this was due to the colonial and conservative nature of the city where people do not want to acknowledge or name racism "out loud", but keep it subtle and tucked away. As one participant from the Iranian community declared you can *"feel it"* with racism in glances, no words spoken, but the eyes can be expressions of discrimination. A female participant from the Pakistani community who wears a hijab stated that racism is in another person's body language as it is non-verbal, for example, eye rolling and harsh stares in passing cars.
- The "silent treatment of racism" is experienced by many members of communities of colour in everyday occurrences. One community member of African descent shares how she was completely ignored by a staff member in a food court restaurant while she was waiting to be served and eventually she left without any food. Some female members of the Japanese community commented on how they are often ignored or dismissed by store clerks without any greeting or acknowledgement to them.
- On a daily basis in New Westminster members from cultural, faith and IBPOC communities are dealing with racist comments and microaggressions with the predominant question of *"where are you from?"* Community members feel that this particular question constantly negates their identity and nationality of being Canadian, whether born here or not, as essentially they are not *seen* as being Canadian due to the color of their skin not being white.

- One participant mentioned that even though her husband was born in Canada of Chinese background that most people refer to him as “Chinese” and not as Canadian. This reinforces the mindset that people think of Canadians as people of white European descent and everyone else who immigrated here as not being Canadians.
- The Qayqayt First Nation understands intimately how colonization and systemic racism have wreaked devastation and destruction upon their people, community and generations. A member of the Qayqayt Nation related a story of racism that she experienced when she was growing up in East Vancouver with one white teacher saying to her evening class “do you know any Indians who can hold up a job?” When she replied “yes, my family members” the teacher retorted “well, that’s not the norm.” She also recounts a story of when she was giving birth to her child, there was a Social Worker on hand to determine if she was “fit and healthy” to deliver and take care of the baby. Many Indigenous women have experienced this racist violation which negatively impacts one of the most personal and sacred times of their lives of giving birth and for many White women, they do not undergo this invasiveness and intrusion.
- One First Nations woman highlighted how White people expect First Nations people to do the emotional labour of educating them on racism, white supremacy and white privilege without them having to do the actual work themselves. Systemic racism is perpetuated if White people do not do the work that is necessary to dismantle racist structures and systems as addressing racism requires “active allyship” not “performative allyship.”
- In order to address racism and discrimination faced by First Nations peoples in New Westminster in these critical times of Truth and Reconciliation, there are requests for the City of New Westminster and its representatives to respectfully acknowledge the lands upon which the City was built upon and to actively engage with the community and land requests of the Qayqayt Nation.
- Community members expressed how racist and gender stereotyping is an issue in the Filipino community as many Filipino women are asked the question of “are you a nanny” assuming that most Filipino women are working and living in Canada only as nannies or caregivers.
- One community member from the Pakistani community commented that when he was working at the gas station, there was an angry customer who told him that he should be cleaning, a stereotype that boxes brown people into working as janitors and cleaning due to their skin colour.
- It was mentioned that in the ethno-culturally diverse neighborhood of Queensborough there is a community mindset of “white versus Indian” due to the high South Asian population in this area. This mentality illustrates there is a racial divide in this neighborhood and its community members.
- A First Nations woman mentioned how the racist comment of “why can’t they all get jobs” is a prevalent and common racial slur targeted towards Indigenous peoples with no recognition of how colonization, white supremacy and racism are the reasons why many Indigenous peoples are caught in systemic racism, thereby limiting their economic and livelihood opportunities. It is a vicious colonial cycle of blaming others, without blaming themselves.
- One community member commented that “racial profiling showed its ugly head in our community a couple of months ago” in New Westminster.
- Racial profiling is prevalent in New Westminster as some Latin American community members mentioned that Latin male youth are getting stares and long looks from the police and the Latin American community is taking note of this non-verbal form of harassment and discrimination.
- One participant from the Latin American community mentioned that there is good marketing and promotion of Canada abroad as being an inclusive country but when you get here you see “ghettos of cultural communities” and begin to realize how racism is embedded in institutions, structures, and systems here.

- Some participants shared that since they do not have the tools to express themselves in English due to language barriers that they cannot defend themselves when racial comments and actions are being displayed towards them. Community members are also frustrated when others say to them “speak English” when English is not their first language as there doesn’t seem to be an allowance or patience to accept that not all community members in New Westminster speak English fluently. Especially as New Westminster has a high percentage of community members from diverse racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.
- A few members stated that they when they face racism whether covert or overt that they tend to ignore it as they do not want to deal with it, and this is their main coping mechanism when encountering racism in their lives. One participant from the Chinese community mentioned that her father knew he was known by others as the “chink”, and he told her “I just didn’t think about it.”
- A male participant from the Muslim community commented that Muslim men “are always prepared in public of being attacked” and he says there is a perception that if you’re brown and have a beard then you are a radical Muslim. When he is navigating public spaces he has a prepared speech ready for when he receives verbal racial comments and slurs. He also mentioned that a Muslim man does not want to be the first person making an aggressive move as the narrative usually gets flipped around to make the Muslim man at fault when he in fact is not. He also commented that the “narrative gets turned around based on ethnicity for IBPOC people.”
- A member from the African/Black community shared his experience of waiting for two hours at the New Westminster police department to report a scam incidence and for those 2 hours no one approached him and in the end they told him to go back home, and nothing was ever done about the scam incidence. In his opinion it was a case of racism in the way he was treated at the police department. He reflected that if he was a White person, would he have had to wait so long only to be told to go?
- A member of the African/Black community who is very involved in his cultural community has identified that their youth are walking around with a deep sense of “hopelessness” as young Black men in New Westminster. He made the chilling statements that “*our youth are dying*” and the community is “*burning every day.*”
- It was requested that City Hall be involved in the African/Black/Caribbean community other than politicians coming around only during election time for speech and photo opportunities in order for decision makers to have a “political, social and cultural understanding of the Black community.”
- It was highlighted that the Ethiopian community is “living under constant fear” of being attacked and according to a community member that is why there are not many Black people in parks throughout New Westminster. The Ethiopian community would like to see the City invite them into community discussions to address their cultural and racial concerns and issues as presently this community does not feel recognized or respected by City Hall.
- A Japanese community member highlighted that compared to other ethnic-culturally diverse communities who have strong cultural representations in specific geographical locations (e.g., Chinese community in Richmond), the Japanese community is different as it is spread out across Vancouver and the outlining municipalities. He also mentioned that due to the traumatic legacy of Anti-Asian racism and racist internment camps in the province that many Japanese people after World War II did not want to retain their culture and congregate together in certain areas and instead focused more on assimilation into the dominant white society.
- A prominent member of the Japanese community who is very involved in his community mentioned that there has been no targeting of racism being directed solely at the Japanese community. However, he said a few individual Japanese community members have received racial slurs and comments. One

community issue identified in the Japanese community is the gender and racial stereotype of Japanese women having a submissive and subdued nature.

- According to one participant “there’s a common narrative for white people that only racial slurs imply racism. Covert racism doesn’t exist in their books. I recently talked about cultural appropriation in a local New West group and every white person thought it is their right to debate whether something is racist/cultural appropriation or not.” This is white privilege.
- Many community members mentioned the critical need for people to address and acknowledge that white supremacy, white privilege and white fragility are upholding individual, institutional and systemic racism and that more workshops need to be delivered to White audiences, so they understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to racism and discrimination.
- According to one community member “the system does not allow for any person of colour to raise questions on racism as in many occasions when they do raise concerns this will intensify the problem where they will label you and then make a case for you to leave the place...there is not room at all.”
- Some community members have expressed frustration and anger in how some White allies are speaking for and over people of colour and occupying too much space in conversations of racism and that these allies need to realize that this behaviour is one of white privilege which leads to the racist behaviour of minimizing the voices of colour in the room.
- One participant from the Filipino community mentioned that while she was working at a coffee shop in New Westminster, a man said thank you in Mandarin to her and she politely told him that she didn’t speak Mandarin and then he said, “Asians look all the same” and then proceeded to say thank you in Korean. These cultural assumptions through white privilege can be considered forms of microaggressions.

## Workplace Racism and Discrimination

Many people from Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities in New Westminster cited workplace harassment, discrimination and racism as prevalent reasons for them leaving their jobs and careers especially as they feel that most of the racist incidences are not taken seriously due to institutional and systemic racism which ultimately protects and empowers those already in power and harms everyone else. Community members are also highly aware that implicit/unconscious bias is at play in hiring and retaining practices which selects White people over Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples for positions and promotions. As one community member of the African community proclaimed, “*it’s time to talk about race at work!*” Workplace discrimination and racism are deeply impacting the lives of Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples as it affects their careers, incomes, families, health and lives whether they stay in oppressive racist situations or leave the workplace. Community members were able to share their stories and experiences of workplace harassment, discrimination and racism through the cultural cafes, interviews and community survey.

- Community members expressed how implicit/unconscious bias plays into racist interviewing and hiring practices such as racialized peoples receiving no eye contact during a job interview or their resumes being passed over due to their names not sounding European. Participants expressed that job interviews for them are often dehumanizing processes where they are not treated with dignity and respect.

- The majority of immigrant and newcomer participants mentioned that when they hear the words “you don’t have Canadian experience” this puts up a racist barrier for them to access the Canadian workforce as it means that their degrees, education and experience in their home countries is not as valid or good enough as Canadian credentials. This is a “catch-22” scenario that many immigrants and newcomers are caught in as they have all of the qualifications to be professionals in their own countries, but they are not considered qualified professionals in their own fields once in Canada.
- A member of the African/Black community commented on how he is constantly asked the question of “where did you get your degree from” when he is looking for work and being interviewed. He recalls that one time when he stated he had 20 years of experience plus the academic credentials for the position he still did not get the interview. He then decided to go to UBC to obtain his MSC and with his Canadian degree, along with his degrees from Africa, he thought it would be easier to obtain work but in the end it was simply not true. After all the years and money that he spent into obtaining a Canadian degree, he was told that he was still not qualified. This is the vicious cycle of systemic racism that many people of colour go through to prove that they are educated and qualified to work in Canada.
- A member of the African/Black community mentioned how he experienced direct and subtle acts of racism in his government workplace with people criticizing and undermining him and his work, and with no equity officer or office to support him he had nowhere to address the individual and institutional racism he was experiencing and eventually he left the government ministry.
- Some community members mentioned that it was really tough to “break the wall” in terms of advancing into their careers due to the barriers created by institutional and systemic racism not allowing them to progress and move up into higher positions and levels. For example, a participant of the Filipino community told the story of when he became a Manager and others said he was not capable and that he should be a janitor. He wonders how can you break the barrier and put more Indigenous and racialized peoples into positions of power in workplaces?
- One community member highlighted the fact that light skin is a determinant of getting hired. Another member stated that “salary is based on your skin colour” indicating that the darker your skin tone, the lower the salary.
- Many of the participants commented on receiving a lower salary than their White colleagues and that they are often looked over when it comes to promotions and applying for higher level jobs in their workplaces. One woman, originally from Iran, mentioned how her husband who was teaching at UBC applied for a position which he had previously taught the course in and ultimately they hired someone else with less experience and as a result of this incidence, he left UBC.
- One member from the Filipino community commented on how he experiences bullying, harassment and discrimination daily by his co-workers and says, “it’s the modern year but it still looks like 100 years ago and it’s getting worse.”
- A member from the Punjabi community recalls his past story of when he was working at a sawmill and was physically attacked by a White man with a knife leaving him with lifetime scars on his body. He said that if this racist incident happened today that it would be called a “hate crime.”
- Community members from the Punjabi community related that Indians need to work harder because of the job discrimination that they face. This is a common sentiment amongst immigrants, newcomers and people of colour as they realize they have more invisible expectations placed upon them due to their colour, ethnic, religion and other intersectional identities.
- Racist comments are everyday occurrences in workplaces between employers, employees and clients/customers. One participant from the Punjabi community overheard one of his employees make the racist comment that “Indians are wolves in sheep clothes”.

- Some of the participants from the South American communities are “economic migrants” who have left South America due to reasons such as high inflation, in some cases 40%, and political unrest, and now find themselves living and working in New Westminster. As professionals they said it has been extremely difficult for them to find positions within their careers and credentials due to racism and discrimination in the workforce.
- Female participants from the Pakistani community commented that they are not getting jobs because of wearing the hijab and that they now have become accustomed to this racial and religious discrimination when looking and applying for work. Some of these women also said that they felt they needed to take off their hijabs in order to get hired and maintain a good job – a religious sacrifice in the face of workplace racism.
- One member from the Pakistani community who works in the education workforce commented that for the cultural festival of Indian Diwali that many teachers and staff wear the “salwar kameez” Indian clothing but on the Muslim celebration of EID no one wears a hijab. She wonders why not and questions the favoritism between cultural communities by the dominant White workforce?
- One of the participants interviewed mentioned he has an active workplace racism and harassment case and is presently taking a leave of absence from work while waiting for the case to conclude. Racism is real in the workplace.
- One member from the Filipino community has noticed how some of his staff are condescending towards him when he delegates/discusses work to them and how they question his credentials and capabilities to be in his position as Project Lead. He also finds that some staff change their demeanor when they are talking to a White person in the same position as him and that they are more agreeable and pleasant when a White person is delegating work to them. He states that he is “not sure if staff behaviours are intentional or not, not entirely sure, since most leads are Caucasian then staff may be resistant in being led by a person from a Minority group.”
- One member from the QTBIPOC community mentioned how as a frontline worker they were often called “Chink” and “Dyke” as well as hearing the words of “hate Asians.”
- One member from the African/Black community who is a professional engineer mentioned that when he went to GT Hiring for employment support and services he was told to “go for a cleaning job” instead of aiming for a job in his profession as he was told this was a more realistic work option for him.

## Intercultural Racism and Discrimination

The key findings from the community and cultural engagement sessions have revealed that members from cultural, faith and IBPOC communities are experiencing intercultural racism in their lives and communities. Interculturalism refers to moving away from the static concept of multiculturalism to one where active dialogue and interactions are encouraged and promoted between different cultures. This report highlights the realities that people from different cultures in New Westminster are experiencing “intercultural racism” a term which the Consultant describes as “a form of racism that exists between different cultures, where one culture displays racist and discriminatory behaviour against another culture.” Intercultural racism can also be seen as lateral violence or horizontal violence in IBPOC communities where there is “minority on minority” violence. The following stories shared by community members impress the need for better understanding and awareness on how intercultural racism and discrimination is impacting cultural, faith and IBPOC communities in New Westminster and neighboring municipalities.

- Many participants mentioned intercultural racism as a problem in their workplaces where staff and colleagues discriminate between each other based on factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Participants described that intercultural racism is rampant in the workplace as many of them have heard racist slurs and comments from one racial/cultural group against another racial/cultural group, such as racist words between staff from First Nations and East Asian communities.
- A few participants mentioned that colourism, which is racism and discrimination based on your skin colour and shade, exists within their cultures by discriminating against people of darker skin in their own communities and other cultural communities. A few members of the Filipino community mentioned that in their culture there is the beauty concept that the lighter the skin colour, the more beautiful the person, as well as the view that the darker the skin colour, the less attractive the person. Colourism exists in many other cultures and countries such as Nigeria and India where there is favoritism and preference towards those with lighter skin in employment, cultural and community situations.
- Members of the Muslim community highlighted an example of intercultural racism where they heard a Punjabi radio show host on air make some discriminatory remarks against Muslim people. They also mentioned that hate literature against Muslim people was distributed at one of the Vaisakhi events put on by the Punjabi community.

## Public Spaces and Safety

Many people from Indigenous, Black and racialized communities experience violent and subtle displays of racism and hate on a daily basis in public spaces such as streets, parks and public transit. A climate of fear exists in public spaces as it is in these spaces where Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples realize their lives could be threatened and even lost based on their skin colour, language and appearance. The following participant stories highlight how racism and discrimination is prevalent in the public spaces of New Westminster and its neighbouring municipalities.

- One young woman from the African/Black community shared how White people in New Westminster walk by her on the streets while clenching their purses, indicating that she may rob them based on the colour of her skin.
- Some participants shared how they see and hear of many children of colour being bullied and harassed on school grounds and parks sometimes with adults as bystanders who let the racism roll out onto these public spaces which gravely hurt and harm IBPOC children.
- Many participants spoke of displays of hatred and racism experienced in public spaces such as one man from the Punjabi community who said once he had his car window smashed at a grocery store and he talked about incidences with White people in cars driving by him and swearing at him with profane gestures.
- A young woman from the African/Black community shared her personal story of one day sitting on the sky train with a friend when a White female passenger dug her hands aggressively into her hair and when she instantly said out loud “don’t touch me” she also noticed how no one on the SkyTrain said anything to support her and she felt she had to do the emotional labour to handle this racist situation on her own. She also felt because of the fact that she had to stand up for herself that this led to her being labeled as that “angry black woman” when all she was doing was defending herself, when no one else did.

- Some members from the African/Black community feel that their community is non-existent in New Westminster, and they want safer public spaces for them to feel comfortable moving around in, especially as they are a racial minority in the city.
- One woman from the Pakistani community commented on how she was attacked and stepped on in a public space with a backpack thrown at her and that no one in the public who were watching this racist incidence did anything to intervene and stop the racist attack. She believes that *“everybody is complicit”* in allowing these microaggressions and racist incidences to occur in public spaces.
- A few seniors of ethno-culturally diverse backgrounds shared stories of standing at intersections and walking on sidewalks when they received hateful and threatening stares by White people which has left them feeling unsafe and vulnerable in the public spaces of New Westminster.

## Racism and Mental Health

It is unquestionable that racism has dire significant impacts on mental health. The visible and invisible dire consequences of racism are immeasurable when it comes to the mental health and stress suffered by Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples. According to Dr. Vijay Seethapathy, the chief medical officer at BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services: *“If someone is experiencing inappropriate behaviours or comments or is disadvantaged because of culture, creed or skin colour, the immediate effect is stress... it can have a long-lasting impact on a client’s physiological and mental health status. Stress related to racism and discrimination is just the start of a cascade of changes that impact a person’s functioning, resilience, confidence and coping skills.”* The participants in the cultural cafes, interviews and community survey courageously shared the following stories of how racism has impacted their mental health and lives.

- Some of the participants, who are now adults, talked about their childhood trauma associated with racism that they experienced by students and teachers in their elementary to high school years. A few male members of the Punjabi community expressed how when they were in school, they experienced physical and verbal attacks daily as they wore a turban and kara (sacred bracelet) and were discriminated against the colour of their skin and also their religion and its sacred symbols.
- One community member from the Punjabi community shared his stories of experiencing racism throughout his school years where he said almost on a regular basis someone would pull off his turban as a racist act. He stated that he hated his whole junior high school experience. As a result of his negative and racist incidences in school, he says he is traumatized by these past racist experiences and that today he looks at many White people as racists.
- One female youth from the Filipino community commented on how the childhood traumatic event of being teased by white girls at lunchtime, who would say that her Filipino food was disgusting and stinks, still impacts her today as a young adult.
- Some participants discussed that when they encounter racism in the workplace, that due to cultural norms of not going directly to the boss, that they do not report the incidence in fear of losing their jobs which would ultimately lead to negative impacts on their work and families. This is a vicious cycle where many people from IBPOC communities experience racism in the workplace but they end up not reporting these racist incidences in order to keep their jobs and livelihoods. This ends up taking a mental, emotional, physical and spiritual toll on Indigenous and racialized peoples as they realize that to fight systemic racism will come at a price and consequences such as being fired and losing their job.

- Many of the participants cited how the COVID pandemic has placed additional amounts of stress in all areas of their lives, and some have expressed how the overall heightened societal anxiety of the pandemic has also brought out more racist and hate crimes and attacks to be committed in IBPOC communities.
- A few male members of the Punjabi community mentioned how they have mentally trained and prepared themselves everywhere they go to “act better” and not complain in order to secure educational and professional opportunities. A female member of the Chinese community also said that “if you look different, you have to act better.” It is evident that many immigrants, newcomers and Canadians of colour feel this constant mental burden of proving themselves in order to secure educational and professional opportunities in a White dominant society.
- A few participants shared how intergenerational racism has negatively impacted their lives with stories of their own parents not wanting to acknowledge or talk about racism thereby creating intergenerational suffering where past trauma is part of the present generation.
- One participant mentioned that when she was a child in her elementary school she noticed that her Malaysian heritage was not honoured or ever mentioned, and she now realizes as an adult how damaging this was on her identity and self-esteem while she was growing up.
- One student from the South Asian community shared his stories of being silenced by his White professor at Douglas College as well as experiencing microaggressions and covert racist behaviour by this professor. This eventually resulted in severe mental health and physical issues with the student losing his hair and teeth due to the severe stress caused by this individual and institutional racism.
- Some women from the Pakistani community related how they decided to remove their hijabs once they arrived in Canada as they were extremely stressed and fearful of Islamophobia and being targeted as Muslim women, especially after the 9/11 attacks. These women also expressed that today they are now very fearful for their daughters who go to university, due to the recent racist and deadly attack by a White man who drove into and killed four innocent members of a family from Pakistan while they were walking on the streets in London, Ontario.
- For some elderly IBPOC folks, the COVID pandemic has created “societal fear” with a few seniors of colour feeling more vulnerable and afraid in these heightened times of racism and discrimination. One elderly woman of Chinese background mentioned an incident where she was standing at an intersection and a group of men started to give her uncomfortable and racist stares which made her very afraid and stressed as she had never felt this way before, and she said that she “can feel racism in the air now.” An elderly woman of Fijian background shared how she used to say “hello” to people on the streets and she said this social security nest is now gone as she is fearful of acknowledging others in public spaces.

In order to provide “community snapshots” of racism and discrimination identified by members of specific cultural, faith and IBPOC communities in New Westminster, the following boxes highlight key themes in some of these distinct communities.

**African/Black Communities**

City Hall needs to reach out and create relationships with the African/Black communities to learn about the issues they are facing in New Westminster such as Black youth feeling a sense of deep hopelessness in the city.

**Pakistani Community**

Muslim women wearing the hijab have experienced physical and verbal attacks of racism and they are living in constant fear of Islamophobia.

**Filipino Community**

There is a stereotype that Filipino people work predominantly in caregiving and cleaning positions making it difficult for them to “break the wall” and advance into higher professional positions.

**Latin American Communities**

Many professionals from Latin America left their countries due to economic and political turmoil and are now facing individual, institutional and systemic racism in Canada making it extremely difficult for them to find work within their professions and academic credentials .

**Indigenous Communities**

What is critically needed is “active allyship” not “performative allyship” in order to address and dismantle racism experienced by Indigenous peoples and communities.

**Punjabi Community**

Punjabi men have received racist attacks physically and verbally due to wearing the cultural and religious symbol of a turban.

**Diverse Seniors Community**

Seniors of ethno-culturally diverse backgrounds feel very afraid and vulnerable when walking in public spaces in New Westminster due to the heightened hate crimes against Asian and racialized peoples.

**IBPOC Youth Community**

IBPOC youth/students who experience racism and hate in the public school and post-secondary education systems suffer from trauma, mental health issues, and high levels of stress in their lives.

**Diverse Newcomers Community**

The constant questioning of “where are you from” makes it extremely challenging for immigrants, newcomers and racialized people to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance as being Canadian.

The Rising Up! project illuminates the racial emergency that permeates every city and its communities and the findings from the cultural cafes, interviews and community survey reveal that racism is real, raw, and ravaging the lives and communities of Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples in New Westminster. The intention of the community and cultural engagement phase was to respectfully seek out the guidance, wisdom and lived experiences of 65 community members on how to shift the racial emergency out of the shadows and into the light in New Westminster. It is in this “shift” where the greatest and most courageous anti-racism work needs to be done, which is for all levels of society and government to recognize and address the realities of racism and to be willing to listen and learn through other ways of knowing, doing and being. According to one community member, who participated in the community survey:

*“The first thing is to recognize the existence of the problem, then create a platform for discussion and further understanding for all parties. The current system is believed to be a colonialist system that does not allow discussions, questions, or any other forms of communication over racism. Many believe that there is no racism as they are most comfortable by their racist actions. Can you create a platform that we can tell the story?”*

The intention of the Rising Up! project was to create this platform for each of the 65 community members to “voice their stories” through pathways of honest, emotional and courageous conversations on racism and discrimination. By sharing and releasing their traumas and truths on racism and discrimination, these community members are rising up with a series of recommendations on how the citizens and City of New Westminster can individually and collectively move forward towards active truth and reconciliation, decolonization, and anti-racism work. These recommendations have been analyzed and categorized into **five themes** to highlight the key areas and actions steps identified by members of Indigenous, Black and racialized communities in New Westminster that are needed to address the racial emergency in the streets, public spaces, institutions, communities, and the city: *1) Role of the City; 2) Language and Communication; 3) Public Education; 4) Cultural & Intercultural Initiatives; and 5) Anti-Racism Initiatives.*

## Role of the City

- Community members identified that the City and its Police Department can play a more active role in ensuring that public spaces are safer and more welcoming to Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples and communities. City staff can work with local businesses on a “Safer Spaces” initiative which involves businesses signing up to be safe spaces (with a sign on their doors) for people to shelter in when they face racist attacks and hate crimes out in the public. The City can also conduct a “public spaces audit” to locate which areas of the city that Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples deem safe and unsafe for them to navigate.
- It was identified that the City needs to take more of an “active” allyship and not “performative” allyship role when it comes to implementing the actions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, developing decolonizing protocols and practices, and engaging with the Qayqayt Nation. The request is for the City to develop respectful, knowledgeable and culturally sensitive protocols and practices and a trusting and transparent relationship with the Qayqayt Nation and its members.

- It is also the request of the Qayqayt Nation that a parcel of land in New Westminster be provided to their Nation in order to establish a base of cultural history, education, rituals and pride with a ceremonial longhouse for the Qayqayt people and the next generations. *Without a cultural base, where is the culture?*
- Members from the Filipino community highlighted that the City is not recognizing or seeing Filipino representation and contributions in the city. The community has echoed the sentiments that the City “be concerned with us” and for them to address their specific cultural needs in New Westminster. A community member stated for the City to “reach out to us!”
- One community member expressed their support and congratulated the City in approving the rezoning application of the Glenbrook North housing development which is the City’s first intercultural multi-family development of this nature between the First Nations community and the Swahili community. This community member is requesting that other intercultural housing developments be promoted and approved by the City where community residents from different cultures, faiths and languages can learn and live together.
- A few members outlined the need for the City to develop more anti-racism initiatives with direct input from cultural, faith and IBPOC communities in New Westminster.

## Language and Communication

- A member of the Ethiopian community commented that he has heard many cases of Ethiopian people going to City Hall with their questions and concerns but due to language barriers and communication gaps they are not able to articulate their questions and end up going home without any answers. Another community member cited the need for City staff to be more patient with people who do not speak English as it may take more time to understand their needs and requests. One general request from a variety of cultural and faith groups is that “*City Hall should respect and listen to us and provide us with translators.*”
- A general feedback from many community members is the need for more ESL programs in New Westminster for immigrants and newcomers.
- Members of the Filipino community stated that there is a need for signage in Tagalog throughout the city as there is already signage in Chinese and Punjabi languages. It was emphasized that Filipino elders in particular need signage in Tagalog to better navigate the services and businesses throughout New Westminster. One member asked, “*Why is the Filipino language not being recognized*” in the city. Another member highlighted that the City of Vancouver has Tagalog translations on their website, but the City of New Westminster does not have any Tagalog translations and is requesting that the City consider having a Tagalog translation tab on its website.

## Public Education

- One community member, who happened to be one of the few participants of White European background, mentioned the need for “correct” education in the form of critical race theory and decolonization to be taught at elementary to high school levels.
- The Gurdwara Sahib Sukh Sagar (Gurdwara) in Queensborough is an exemplary community supporter and advocate for education and knowledge and has thus far donated \$2,000,000 dollars to educational initiatives with some money donated to schools in New Westminster. This illustrates the power that

faith based communities, such as the Sikh community, can play in supporting and financing community development and educational development in New Westminster.

- A member of the Japanese community mentioned that her son is learning about different cultural festivals such as Diwali, the Indian celebration of lights, at school and after celebrating Diwali one day in his class he came home and asked her, “*what about my Asian culture?*” There is a need to implement intercultural celebrations and events to ensure that as many cultures as possible can be represented and honoured in the public education system.
- A young White Douglas College student stated that education is the most important way to address racism and that the school system needs to adapt to First Nations knowledge and education systems. He also outlined that in high schools there is a dire need to have diversity amongst the teaching staff.
- Based on some feedback by IBPOC college students who shared their experiences of individual and systemic racism at Douglas College, it was recommended that professors and staff take anti-racism and cultural competency workshops, unconscious bias training, and bystander intervention training.
- The Aboriginal Gathering Place at Douglas College is an example of how an institution is trying to decolonize the system by ensuring that there is an academic and cultural space for First Nations students to feel safe and welcomed, culturally and spiritually supported, and empowered with the guidance and knowledge of elders and mentors. . A First Nations community member commented that the Gathering Place was “spiritual nourishment” for him when he was a student at Douglas College. One recommendation is that the Aboriginal Gathering Place concept be created in New Westminster public schools.
- A community member working in the education sector suggested that settlement and cultural organizations should connect more with international students at Douglas College as some of these students will be applying for their permanent residency status and will need assistance and support to navigate services and resources in New Westminster.
- There was great emphasis on “teaching our children a different way” by incorporating knowledge bases from Indigenous, Black and racialized communities into the educational curriculum, and by hiring and retaining teachers of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.



### Cultural and Intercultural Initiatives

- Community members from cultural, faith and IBPOC groups expressed deep interest in learning more about First Nations peoples and cultures, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and supporting decolonizing processes. One Filipino community member inquired about “*how to walk with First Nations*” illustrating a need for more intercultural initiatives to create bridges of understanding and respect between cultural communities and First Nations communities. A member from the African community echoed similar sentiments by expressing “*we need to learn with Indigenous folks.*”
- Cultural communities can support First Nations communities by inviting each other to their cultural festivals, rituals and places of worship. For example, in 2014 at the PNE Convention, the Gurdwara formally told the Qayqayt Nation that they want to support the Nation, and the Qayqayt Nation reciprocated this offer to the Sikh community. In 2018, the Sikh community presented a “kirpan” (holy Sikh religious symbol) to the Qayqayt First Nation as a gesture of cultural solidarity and respect. Presently, the Gurdwara has been collaborating with First Nations communities and plans to set up

intercultural projects with the Qayqayt Nation in the future around language preservation and education. As one member of the Sikh community commented *“we have good relationships with First Nations and are building allyship”* demonstrating the commitment towards harmonious intercultural relationships.

- A female IBPOC student at Douglas College talked about the importance of IBPOC students mentoring and supporting each other through their experiences of racism and discrimination. She wants to “be that voice” and she understands the importance to “see others through herself.” Douglas College can look into creating mentoring initiatives specifically for IBPOC students to support and uplift one another.
- A member of the Japanese community expressed how she would like to see Japanese events being held and celebrated in New Westminster as she mentioned that she has not attended a local Japanese event since she moved here many years ago.
- In 2006, the Gurdwara and Sikh community raised \$500,000 for the Pakistani earthquake as a “symbol of reaching outside the faith” and to assist and support the Muslim community. Intercultural initiatives like this are great examples on how faith groups can support one another thereby reducing intercultural racism between different cultural communities.
- To promote cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding, the Sikh/Punjabi community has held many turban tying workshops at community events and for non-profit agencies in New Westminster to educate the public on the religious and cultural significance of the turban and to also have citizens sit down and experience wearing a turban. As one Punjabi community member said *“turban tying is a successful ice breaker”* indicating a great intercultural community initiative. Other cultural communities may also want to consider showcasing their cultural and religious symbols through similar initiatives where citizens are active participants in experiencing different cultural ways.
- Members of different Latin American communities illuminated the fact that there are no Latin American festivals being celebrated in New Westminster whereas the City of Vancouver hosts a Latin American Festival annually. The City of New Westminster has the opportunity to reach out to the Latin American communities to create and collaborate on projects and initiatives, especially arts and culture based, that celebrate and honor the myriad of Latin cultures in the city.
- A few members from the various cultural, faith and IBPOC communities expressed the need for more cultural grants from the City of New Westminster in order for these marginalized communities to showcase their cultures and become more visible in the city. Members identified that presently there is a Multicultural Day in New Westminster and that this event could be conducted on a larger scale with different venues in the city.
- One youth from the Filipino community stated that in all her life, being born and raised in New Westminster, that she had gone to only one Filipino event in the city which was actually presented by a Filipino out of town touring group. She is asking for the City of New Westminster to support Filipino events, such as music and dance, around the city to promote *“opportunities to celebrate our culture.”*
- A community member from Columbia mentioned the need for more cultural mentoring programs in settlement/community agencies in New Westminster. In the recent past, she was a client of MOSAIC’s Cultural Mentor Program where she connected with a cultural mentor on a weekly basis, and she found this extremely valuable in navigating her journey as an immigrant in her early days of settlement.
- A few members from different communities spoke on the need to create cultural adaptation processes that assist newcomers in understanding and adapting to Canadian culture, and that also provides information to Canadians on how to better relate to newcomers of diverse cultures. Another suggestion was to develop a guidebook of cross-cultural awareness and understanding for newcomers and

Canadians in order for them to better understand and respect one another and their different cultures. A community member recommended having a chapter in this book dedicated to the “do’s and don’ts” for newcomers when navigating Canadian culture and its characteristics.

- There were a few female Pakistani community members who mentioned the need to have more “Open Mosque Day” events where mosques across the province provide opportunities for the public to learn about Islam, and religious customs such as why women wear the hijab and the significance of the Hadj pilgrimage. They also mentioned the need to provide prayer rooms in public spaces like shopping centres and airports so Muslim people have these rooms available to pray in when navigating the cityscape. One suggestion was to have these prayer rooms/spaces identified on a cultural map with markers on these locations throughout the city.
- Many community members of various cultural, faith and IBPOC communities voiced the dire need to have culturally appropriate mental health and medical resources be available in health institutions, social service agencies and settlement/cultural organizations in New Westminster.
- One community member who works in the education sector recommended that the Welcome Centre at the high school be a community hub for other schools and the public to come and learn about cultural differences and promote intercultural awareness, especially on Professional Development days.
- Events that focus on creating community connections and intercultural development were listed as important anti-racism measures that the City of New Westminster and local settlement/cultural organizations could develop together.
- Some community members from different cultural, faith and IBPOC communities mentioned that they would like to see more “cultural cafes” being conducted on racism and anti-racism in New Westminster.
- Members from the Filipino community highlighted the need to provide newcomer Filipino children and youth, whose parents were gone for years to work in Canada while they were living in the Philippines, and their parents with cultural resources and coping strategies to rebuild their relationships with one another. As one member suggested, these strategies could be part of a “how to be” guide developed for Filipino newcomer children and youth and their parents.
- One member from the Filipino community suggested that a Filipino guidebook series be developed on “culture shock” to educate Filipino newcomers on Canadian customs and idiosyncrasies, with translations in Tagalog.



### Anti-Racism Initiatives

- Many community members from various cultural, faith and IBPOC communities are advocating for racism to be named “out loud” when acts of racism and microaggressions are committed against them. One member voiced that “with respect and depending on the situation, I will talk loudly to provide them with my points of view and/or reasons.” According to another community member:

*“I do a lot of anti-racism work and as someone who experiences it on the regular, I’ve finally come into my power to be able to call it out and name it. That usually is the first step. I try and take on the emotional labour of explaining why their behaviour is racist, provide resources on privilege and power. And if they’re open to it, eventually proceed to guiding them towards anti-racism training.”*

- Faith based communities can be active players in developing anti-racism initiatives and contributing to the betterment of Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities in New Westminster. For example, the Guru Nanak's Kitchen program which was started in the New Westminster Gurdwara by the Sikh community is an excellent example of a faith group creating a highly successful anti-racism initiative. The Guru Nanak's Kitchen provides free food to people living in the Downtown Eastside. In the first year of business ironically the people that were receiving free food were also the same people making racist slurs at the Sikh community members who were serving them the food. However, members of the Sikh community mentioned that the Guru Nanak's Kitchen was able to turn around racism through this food program. In a few years of business once the people in the Downtown Eastside realized that the Guru Nanak's Kitchen was providing them with free food on a consistent basis in a friendly and safe manner, the racism started to stop, and the realization kicked in that the Punjabi/Sikh community were actually helping them in their lives. This is where "food justice" programs can play a significant role in anti-racism initiatives.
- A member of the Sikh/Punjabi community commented that the Gurdwara likes to take an active role in the annual New Westminster Hyack International Parade because it wants to educate the public and break down barriers to create more cross-cultural understanding amongst the citizens of New Westminster. This parade may be an opportunity for other faith-based and cultural groups to participate in and share and promote their cultures with society at large.
- A few First Nations community members discussed the need for active allyship in fulfilling some of the Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action and the need for non-Indigenous peoples to start educating themselves on the traumas and terrors of racism on First Nations peoples and communities by reading important documents such as "In Plain Sight."
- A few community members from the various cultural, faith, and IBPOC communities mentioned the need for Bystander Intervention Training workshops for the general public and for people working in community, education, and government agencies. According to one community member "*no one is there to make others accountable of their racist actions*" which is why bystander education and training is a critical anti-racism initiative.
- A Muslim student at Douglas College highlighted the necessity to address religious discrimination through Islamophobia workshops and courses on Islam in the educational and public settings.
- Members of the Latin American communities highlighted the importance of supporting local Latin businesses and showcasing how Latin Americans are contributing their cultural ways and knowledge bases to the different communities in New Westminster. It was mentioned that the City of New Westminster needs to "*invest in the Latin American communities*" and support them in their cultural, community and professional endeavors.
- A member of the Pakistani community working in the education system commented that "*racism is under the carpet and seems there is a right to humiliate*" and she requested that the teachings of "cultural values and respect" be part of the school curriculum.
- A few First Nations community members mentioned the need for Cultural Safety workshops to be available for community members and cited New Zealand as a leader in developing cultural safety and cultural sensitivity programs.
- One community member commented how the New West Record community newspaper should take more of a leading role in addressing and covering racism and anti-racism stories told through the voices of cultural, faith and IBPOC peoples and communities in New Westminster.

- One community member mentioned that in order to decolonize the city that colonial art objects throughout New Westminster should be selectively taken away as part of anti-racism initiatives.
- One community member wanted to emphasize that some White people tend to take on the “good Samaritan” and colonial mentality that “refugees should be grateful to us” for being in Canada but they do not think about why refugees are here in the first place, not out of choice but are here due to dire and desperate circumstances in their home countries.
- A few community members highlighted the need for anti-racism workshops specifically on white privilege and power for White people to learn to acknowledge their “unconscious bias”, racist behaviours, and to see how their lives are privileged in many ways. One community member expressed:

*“I think people, but specifically white people, need to be told that it isn’t up to them to decide if something is racist or not. Initiatives must involve talking about white fragility and the power dynamics involved in racism. Perhaps the City can host some speaker series for the public, and so can the library.”*

Through the combination of the cultural cafes, interviews and the community survey, a platform was created for people from cultural, faith and IBPOC communities to rise up with their recommendations on addressing racism and discrimination in the communities and city of New Westminster. It is now the hope of these diverse communities that these recommendations will be respected and honoured, and they look forward to be active participants in mobilizing these recommendations into community action – *action for the people, by the people.*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is only when a racial emergency gets alarmed by the general public that it truly becomes an emergency as without any recognition, there is no alarm. Ringing this racial emergency is an individual and collective responsibility and with the unearthing of the mass graves of Indigenous children across this country, the sound can no longer be ignored as it echoes for us all to hear and see that a racial emergency exists in every community, town, and city. The purpose of the Rising Up! Anti-Racism project is to shine a torchlight of truth onto the hidden racism lurking in the shadows and the blatant discrimination displayed in daily acts across the city of New Westminster in schools, businesses, workplaces and public spaces. The project provides a missing platform for people living on the margins in New Westminster to come into the center by letting their voices ring loud and clear and declare that a racial emergency is here.

The intention of the community and cultural engagement was to amplify and lift up the voices and stories from cultural, faith, and Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities in New Westminster through a series of cultural cafes, interviews, and a community survey. Through these culturally appropriate engagement measures, 65 people courageously came forth from a myriad of cultural, faith, and IBPOC groups to rise up with their truths individually and collectively on the impacts of racism and discrimination on their lives and communities. It was through the platform of authentic storytelling that community members were able to share their stories of suffering around five key themes: racism is real, raw and ravaging; workplace discrimination and racism; intercultural racism and discrimination; public spaces and safety; and racism and mental health. All of these themes are interwoven in the everyday lives of many people from Indigenous, Black and racialized communities in New Westminster and it is important to start unravelling these threads of racism in order to create new ways of thinking, knowing and being.

To start knitting a new fabric over the city of New Westminster, members from cultural, faith, and IBPOC communities are weaving unique patterns of recommendations into how truth and reconciliation, decolonization and anti-racism work can be implemented at the City and community levels. The community members have spoken, and they are requesting this work to deeply involve more interest and support from the City and its representatives, to have more resources and finances funnelled into the areas of language and communication development, ensure that public education is inclusive and includes decolonial pedagogies, and that intercultural and anti-racism initiatives be developed in community, education and government agencies.

With active community participation in the cultural cafes, interviews and community survey, members from the cultural, faith and IBPOC groups in New Westminster will now be watching and waiting for invitations from the City, community, and education organizations to involve them directly in supporting and mobilizing their communities into anti-racism action. As one First Nations community member expressed *“in order to rise up, we must see the way.”* This way must be one which centers the voices and lived experiences of Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples and allows them to lead the path towards decolonization and the dismantlement of systemic racism in the communities and city of New Westminster.

Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples are courageously rising up with their voices from the shadows into the light and speaking their truths to power on racism and discrimination, and it is the hope that their voices and stories will only rise up higher and ring louder throughout the communities and city of New Westminster. From the shadows into the light, let the truths be told.

*“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter”*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Bibliography**

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