



January 2022

# Municipal-led Anti-Racism Dialogue

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## Land Acknowledgement

NPI would like to acknowledge the First Peoples on whose traditional territories we live and work. NPI is grateful for the opportunity to have our offices located on these lands and thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land.

### Our main offices:

- Thunder Bay on Robinson-Superior Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg and Fort William First Nation.
- Sudbury is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnaabeg as well as Wahnapiitae First Nation.
- Kirkland Lake is on the Robinson-Huron Treaty territory and the land is the traditional territory of Cree, Ojibway, and Algonquin Peoples.
- Each community is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

We recognize and appreciate the historic connection that Indigenous people have to these territories. We support their efforts to sustain and grow their nations. We also recognize the contributions that they have made in shaping and strengthening local communities, the province, and Canada.



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Author's calculations are based on data available at the time of publication and are therefore subject to change.

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## About the Northern Analyst Collective

The Northern Analyst Collective, a project of Northern Policy Institute, will allow members to “time share” a professional policy analyst. By merging our collective resources we can ensure that the smallest municipality or local charity can access high-end skills at an affordable price.

## About Northern Policy Institute

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

## NAC Partner



### Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership

The Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership (SLIP) focuses on the development of different initiatives to ensure that Greater Sudbury continues to be a welcoming community for newcomers of all walks of life. The SLIP fosters an inclusive, engaging and collaborative environment with local stakeholders to identify issues, share solutions, build capacity and preserve collective memory for the purpose of ensuring the attraction, settlement, inclusion and retention of newcomers in the City of Greater Sudbury.

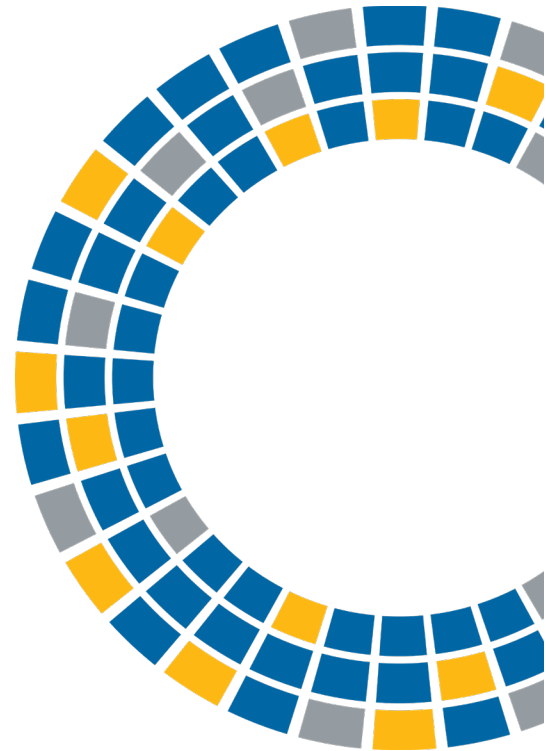


## About the Author

# Larissa Yantha



Larissa Yantha is a prior former analyst/NOHFC intern at Northern Policy Institute. During her BA in Global Studies and MA in Religion, Culture and Global Justice, she became interested in Indigenous capacity and innovation, immigration, and community-driven approaches to anti-racism. Larissa currently acts as the Special Projects Coordinator at the Municipality of West Nipissing where she applies her interdisciplinary knowledge and intersectional research approaches. When not buried in research, Larissa can be found in her hometown of Englehart, volunteering with local initiatives, and roaming Northern Ontario.



## Notes

This case study is a part of a larger series of initiatives that analyze anti-racism and discrimination initiatives across Canada. Borne out of a partnership with Northern Policy Institute, this anti-discrimination and racism work is but one of several efforts the Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership is undertaking.

Please refer to the full report for other case studies and lessons that not only the City of Greater Sudbury can employ, but other communities across Ontario's northern regions as well.



# Municipal-led Anti-Racism Dialogue

*Vancouver, British Columbia*

In 2010, the City of Vancouver put together a project to create a more cohesive city despite being so diverse. Originally called Dialogues between First Nations, Urban Aboriginal and Immigrant Communities in Vancouver, it was shortened to the City of Vancouver Dialogues Project (CVDP) (Suleman 2011). It focused on creating relationships and improving the futures of Vancouver's two most at-risk populations: Indigenous peoples and newcomers (Suleman 2011).



## The Initiative

The City of Vancouver Dialogues Project (CVDP) was led by a Steering Committee, a diverse group of representatives of Indigenous and newcomer origin. The Steering Committee determined that newcomers receive too little information about Indigenous peoples, which leads them to have similar presumptions against Indigenous peoples as many white Vancouverites (Mathur, DeGagné and Dewar 2011). Its goal was to strengthen relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in general (City of Vancouver 2010). As a result, the Steering Committee developed a series of dialogue circles to bring people together to share stories and perspectives on social inclusion, social exclusion, and community relations.

Nine dialogue circles were hosted as part of the original programming between April and July 2010 (City of Vancouver 2010). These circles had 123 participants each and met three times. Two of the dialogue circles were reserved for youth (Suleman 2011). The circles were hosted by various community members such as First Nations leaders, newcomers, and other educational leaders (Chung 2012). These leaders facilitated organized discussion about themes that focused on past, present, and hopeful future relations between Vancouver's key demographics (City of Vancouver 2010). The circles were hosted at significant locations across Vancouver, including First Nations land and newcomer settlement organizations. The main goal of the circles was to embrace Canada's complex past and future realities while overcoming harmful stereotypes (Chung 2012).

## Successes & Achievements

The facilitators of each dialogue circle found the exercise of dialogue and discussion to be very successful in terms of creating friendships. Common themes and concerns arose in the circles, including racism, identity, language, and healing. Participants, regardless of their origin, realized that they had many shared experiences, which prompted an understanding and appreciation of one another (Chung 2012). Contrary to the Steering Committee's initial fears, participants were open to talking about personal and emotionally charged topics. All participants expressed a desire to get to know other cultures better (City of Vancouver 2010).

Beyond the discovery of shared experiences, the dialogues project was also successful because it recognized the need for further programming, a gap that the City of Vancouver has since attempted to fill. Participants urged the city to consider more multicultural aspects to existing public events, as well as using arts and the film industry to share cultural expression and stories with the wider public. They also identified concerns around lack of representation in the media. Lastly, the project made room for impactful community research, which led to the formation of a newcomer's guide that has since been published on the City of Vancouver's website (Reesor 2013). It offers information on community services but also educates readers about urban Indigenous peoples, the history of residential schools, the dialogues project, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The project identified gaps in newcomer relations and addressed issues of racism.





## Key Lessons

Municipalities have an important and fundamental role to play in sustaining multiculturalism and retaining newcomers (Chung 2012). The City of Vancouver recognized that one approach to managing the coexistence of multiple cultures is to create a space that prompts dialogue. Doing this can enable potentially antagonistic parties to talk through concerns and learn from one another. At the very least, dialogue circles can bring curious individuals together for personal growth and social mingling (Chung 2012). The CVDP is one example of a municipal-led initiative that aims to build stronger connections to address discrimination and violence. The circles taught the facilitators that identity can play a large role in marginalization and exclusion. Almost every participant expressed a desire to understand their fluid cultural and racial identity (City of Vancouver 2010). The province of British Columbia, as is true with the rest of Canada, has an unfortunate history of injustices that have been directed at Indigenous peoples and newcomers. Residential schools, land dispossession, societal exclusion, slavery, and racial discrimination have highly affected, and continue to affect, both groups in their struggles for voting rights, safe housing, and employment. Dialogue and shared experience are important themes to uphold in future municipality-driven initiatives. As the CVDP demonstrates, these themes are crucial for breaking down barriers and a must for cities whose populations are continuing to grow (Chung 2012).





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## Related Research

### **Addressing the Cuts Left Behind: Anti-Racism and Discrimination Initiatives for an Inclusive Northern Ontario**

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### **Using Art as a Catalyst for Change**

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