CARRYING ON THE COMMITMENT

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The Municipality of Lethbridge Alberta is proud to be a supporter of the CMARD initiative. Lethbridge is located in southern Alberta; we have a population of approx 93,000 citizens. Lethbridge is located next to the largest reserve in Canada (Kainai/Blood Reserve). Lethbridge is surrounded by beautiful nature and is a very hospitable place to live.

Becoming a CMARD community takes a strong commitment by a Municipality to address racism and discrimination in the community. It is important that community's sign on to the CMARD Charter with the goal of becoming a leader in being a welcoming, safe and inclusive community for all citizens to participate, work, play, travel to, enjoy, etc.

Initially, challenging discussions on racism and discrimination were fraught with difficult assumptions, generalizations and fear. CMARD Lethbridge has role modeled the opportunity to be a leader in creating societal shifts, locating champions and allies, collaborating with services and agencies and shifting human behavior.

Our CMARD Committee is entering its 3rd year of the Building Bridges Action Plan and has gained incredible internal and external recognition. The future direction would have City Council continuing fiscal support to CMARD that operates through the Community & Social Development Committee of Council.

After 3 conferences, community members are informed, active and eager to make Lethbridge a model for other communities. The direction in the future takes on a large social marketing component that stretches to target more citizens.

As the population of Lethbridge continues to grow and become more diverse, it is the responsibility of CMARD Lethbridge to satisfy this growing demand. There are such initiatives as creating an accessible Lethbridge for all citizens; this does not only include physical accessibility, but cognitive/cultural accessibility to public spaces. Another initiative is launching a Safe Harbour program for our downtown business units, so that businesses can take a leadership role in creating welcoming and inclusive communities.

There is also future direction in becoming a "SMART" city and utilizing current technological trends so that the Municipality plays a strong role in connectivity and digital inclusion for all our citizens. A report entitled NIMBY (Not In My Backyard), which was a research project conducted by Dr. Yale Belanger and addressed issues with renting and housing in Lethbridge; this report has created opportunities to engage neighborhoods in inclusion work.

Beyond Your Front Door (BYFD) is an initiative lead by CMARD that looks at creating welcoming and inclusive neighborhoods, while reducing NIMBYism. The pilot project has commenced in two of the more organized and historic neighborhoods, London Road and Westminster. The project has also had other neighborhoods interested in partnerships

with the Municipality in creating citizen engagement in their neighborhoods.

The goal of BYFD is to have these challenging discussions and bring the positive messaging of welcoming and inclusive neighborhoods to every neighborhood, so that citizens feel welcomed, engaged and have opportunities to interact with their neighbors.

Lastly, CMARD Lethbridge envisions a future of continued activism, change and citizen engagement. Through an approach that is about human asset building, it has provided opportunities for citizens to have an active role in CMARD initiatives. The confidence and ability for the community to stand up against racism and discrimination has lead to more opportunities for dialogue, action and learning.

This continued approach in compiling assets, allies and champions of human rights creates a very bright future for CMARD in Lethbridge. As more agencies continue to portray interest in joining CMARD Lethbridge: a strategic planning session, review of our initial action plan and benchmarking initiative are increasingly important. It is necessary for our Municipal leadership to support inclusion policies within our local government that include all citizens in the community of Lethbridge.

Lethbridge is and will always be proud to be a CMARD community and looks forward to continued collaboration in the future.