LETHBRIDGE: A COMMUNITY OF ACTION

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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.

Since 2007, the City of Lethbridge through CMARD has made great strides towards becoming a welcoming, safe and inclusive community. In 2010, CMARD Lethbridge launched its first Inclusion conference with the goal of creating community dialogue and consultation on what an Inclusive community looks like?

The community responded overwhelmingly to the discussion and created ideas for a community action plan. The CMARD Lethbridge committee created the "Building Bridges…A Welcoming and Inclusive Lethbridge Community Action Plan 2011-2021" utilizing the 10 commitments set out by CCMARD.

The plan was presented to city council on January 24, 2011 and was subsequently approved by members of council, which created an opportunity for CMARD to create a position within city hall to manage the plan.

In 2011, the first Inclusion Consultant was hired in the Community & Social Development Group and began preparing internal policy, building relationships in the community and creating documents and networking opportunities both provincially and nationally.

The action plan has been instrumental in guiding the work of CMARD Lethbridge, informing the existing and new community members and reiterating the commitment of City Council as new council's are elected.

The action plan has also functioned as guide for an energetic, passionate, organized and opportunistic CMARD committee, which includes approximately twenty agencies/services and many individual members in the collaboration.

From the time when City Council approved the Building Bridges Action Plan there have been a number of exciting new initiatives that have stemmed out of the plan:

- Hiring of an Inclusion Consultant
- PANGAEA Diversity Café's
- UNITAS Inclusion Series
- (3) CMARD Conferences
- #SayNoToRacismYQL World Cup Social Marketing campaign
- Joint National CAWI initiative

- Myths & Fact Sheets
- Asset Building
- Collaborating with agencies in support of events
- Beyond Your Front Door (Welcoming and Inclusive Neighborhood Project)
- Global Welcome for International Students
- Pathways to Change Aboriginal Model
- Collaborating with Human Resources on Inclusion policies (both internally and externally)
- Releasing Our Spirit

These are just some of the initiatives that have been developed out of creating a CMARD Action Plan. The action plan has created opportunities to acquire champions and allies of human rights in our community, taking on practicum students and managing summer students. The general open ended nature of the 10 commitments, which in its drafting have been localized to meet Lethbridge's needs have provided opportunity to be creative, flexible and action oriented.

In the future, we hope to rewrite a second edition of the action plan to update with the current trends towards being an inclusive community, but the committee is excited to enter into strategic planning in 2014 to discuss the future of CMARD, including: Safe Harbour Project, Social Marketing campaigns, Human Rights Summit, becoming a "SMART" city, Accessibility, CAWI national initiative, benchmarking, Inclusion policy and gender & equity lenses to mention a few.