BRINGING OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER THROUGH CCMARD

(Article by **Aaron Bell** and **Aruna Alexander**) The City of Belleville is a healthy, progressive, diverse, and economically vibrant community. We embrace the multi-cultural make up of our community and we will welcome visitors and celebrate the artistic beauty of our varied cultures.

On January 13, 2014, the City of Belleville voted to become the 59th member of CCMARD. To become a member of CCMARD municipalities must pass a declaration in council, and this act itself calls for the support of actors working across the municipality. For this reason, it seemed only fitting to focus on collaboration and partnership in the launch event. The city of Belleville looks forward to creating a more inclusive and welcoming community that will invite and retain immigrants, be inclusive of Aboriginal peoples, and attract under-represented populations to our workforce. The CCMARD framework helps up to shape a common vision for our community and is a framework in which multiple actors can see themselves and the work that they do, reflected.

PREFACE

In November of 2013, Dr. Aruna Alexander, President of the Quinte Branch of the United Nations Association in Canada, approached Mayor Neil Ellis of The City of Belleville to ask for his support in promoting an important UNESCO programme: The Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD). Because of both Mayor Ellis' strong and enthusiastic support for this initiative, and the ethical leadership shown by members of City Council, two months later, on January 13, 2014, the City of Belleville voted to become the 59th member of CCMARD.

This historic moment was celebrated in the community on March 20, 2014 with 125 people in attendance. Invited as our guest speaker was Meghan Brooks, Programme Officer in Social and Human Sciences at the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. Following Mayor Ellis' address, various community leaders, whose statements appear below, spoke to all assembled of the importance of having the City of Belleville, its institutions, and its citizens, continue working together to make our community one which is welcoming and inclusive.

Recognizing the impact of UNAC's efforts and initiatives thus far, Mayor Neil Ellis presented the United Nations Association in Canada – Quinte Branch with a certificate which reads: "in appreciation of its leadership and collaborative efforts in the City of Belleville to build a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming Community."

Aruna Alexander, City of Belleville, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Joining (CCMARD) in January 2014 was an important initiative at the forefront of the City of Belleville's municipal priorities. Going through the process of joining the Coalition took the hard work of numerous individuals and organizations. To become a member of CCMARD municipalities must pass a declaration in council and this act itself calls for the support of actors working across the municipality in areas such as education, policing, community development, and administration. For this reason, it seemed only fitting to focus on collaboration and partnership in the launch event. To show the way in which the municipality intends to promote the 10 commitments in its work, it invited guests working in these areas to speak to the value of joining the Coalition and what it means to them. Their speeches, captured in brief below, point to the potential contribution of anti-discrimination work to the municipality and what Belleville can contribute to the network more broadly.

MAYOR NEIL ELLIS, CITY OF BELLEVILLE

As Mayor of the City of Belleville I am honoured to say that our community is a member of CCMARD. We are now in a better position to educate our community on anti-racism and diversity initiatives by being part of an international, UNESCO-led network of cities.

Having access to this network of cities allows the City of Belleville to share best practices and resources to combat racism and other forms of discrimination; strengthen partnerships with local organizations, businesses and individuals who are concerned about discrimination; increase sustainability; and document anti-discrimination initiatives through the creation and implementation of a Plan of Action that is approved and adopted by Council. As a new member, we look forward to developing and implementing our action plan. We also look forward to creating a more inclusive and welcoming community that will allow the City of Belleville to be in a better position to attract and retain immigrants, be inclusive of Aboriginal peoples, and attract underrepresented populations to our workforce.

As we move forward on this journey together, we welcome the opportunities and future possibilities our inclusive community will face.

CATHERINE O'ROURKE, DIRECTOR STUDENT SUCCESS, AT LOYALIST COLLEGE

It is a privilege to witness such a momentous occasion in our community. Loyalist College is committed to internationalizing our campus and have embarked on an aggressive international recruitment plan to encourage students to study at Loyalist College. It is critical for me to say with confidence that our community is a welcoming one. Participating in CCMARD is further evidence of Belleville's commitment to meeting this goal.

Equitable access to education globally is a critical philosophical tenet. Through education we can work to address racism and discrimination in our society. Loyalist College has made a commitment to address the educational needs of our students by ensuring we are graduating global citizens capable of being competitive in an increasingly shrinking world. Campus internationalization then becomes a lynch pin in modeling inclusiveness and setting a standard which resists racism. It is critical that we cultivate in our learners a mindset that encourages and celebrates diversity.

It is equally important that we have an open and honest dialogue about hegemonic attitudes, explore biases, and develop strategies for recognizing when a position of privilege creates an environment of exclusion. An event such as the CCMARD launch promotes the importance of addressing intolerance and increasing understanding and acceptance.

RUTH INGERSOLL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF QUINTE

This is an enormous undertaking which will take a lot of time, effort, and diligence on the part of the municipality to remain focused and to continue to move forward as the work progresses. The responsibility however, isn't just that of the municipal government. On an individual level, we need to ask ourselves: Do I instinctively think in a particular way because of how someone looks? Do I make premature judgements or prejudiced statements? On a community level, we need to ask ourselves: When I hear someone make a racist or discriminatory comment, do I speak up and let the person know I find their comments offensive and inappropriate? Or do I remain silent?

We must all commit to joining the municipality in combating racism and discrimination on a daily basis. As individuals in our homes and neighbourhoods, as employers and employees in our work places, as students, teachers and educators in our schools, as part of the non-profit, tourism and business community….we are all responsible for creating a community devoid of racism and discrimination; an inclusive community. One where there is a feeling of belonging for everyone.

MARK FISHER, SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION, HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

It was early in the spring of 2014 when the City of Belleville invited us to participate in an event to join CCMARD. It was a privilege to participate in this historic event because, as the public education provider in the region, Hastings and

Prince Edward District School Board supports and promotes the principles of inclusivity, equity, and diversity. One of the ways we do this is through Growing with Character (GwC), which is our approach to character development. Eight GwC core values provide the foundation for positive engagement with students, each other, and the community, and creates an environment that fosters freedom from bias and harassment. The eight core values are: caring, cooperation, honesty, humour, integrity, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness.

In addition, our policies and procedures demonstrate our commitment to promoting equity, inclusivity, and respect throughout our organization. We believe that our employees and students will achieve their full potential while in safe, respectful, and inclusive learning and working environments. We are committed to the elimination of discrimination, to equity of opportunity and equity of access to all programs, services, and resources. These are critical factors in working towards the well-being of our students, employees, families, and communities. The School Board has made a commitment to equity and inclusivity through public education and we are pleased to contribute to, and take inspiration from, the CCMARD framework to do this.

CORY L. MCMULLAN, CHIEF OF POLICE, BELLEVILLE POLICE SERVICE

As Chief, I was privileged to represent the Belleville Police Service and speak at the ceremony celebrating the City of Belleville joining CCMARD. By formally joining this Coalition our community has everything to gain and nothing to lose! Building a strong inclusive community and supporting zero tolerance for racism and discrimination benefits everyone. Each organization, service, and individual has the capacity to make a positive impact in our community. We all have a shared responsibility where even the smallest act can make a significant difference.

The Belleville Police Service Vision "Service Excellence" can only be achieved by working towards our mission: "In partnership with our community, our members are dedicated to serve and protect. Through education, best practices and enforcement, we will be proactive in enhancing the quality of life, safety and security for all citizens." Through our policing role the Belleville Police Service will support and contribute to the efforts of others in making Belleville a municipality free of racism and discrimination. Joining CCMARD is only the beginning, now the real work begins. Let's build on each other's knowledge, skills and abilities by sharing best practices and working in collaboration to enhance community safety, all while furthering an atmosphere of equality and respect for each and every citizen.

MEGHAN BROOKS, PROGRAM OFFICER, SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES, CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO is thrilled when new members join CCMARD and agree to join with municipalities from across Canada to enhance the inclusiveness of their communities. The Canadian Commission was invited by the City of Belleville to attend its launch event, and it was an honour to represent the network and forge relationships with local stakeholders.

The launch event held in Belleville, coinciding with the celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21st), was a successful event. It was encouraging to see a broad range of stakeholders present, including the Mayor and city staff, the United Nations Association in Canada (Quite Branch), community activists, members of religious communities, and citizens. A highlight of the event was the way in which representatives of different organizations in Belleville spoke to the importance of CCMARD and the benefits they foresaw to their work.

The motivation and dedication of the speakers and attendees was energizing, and affirms that Belleville is committed to addressing racism and discrimination. Effective anti-discrimination work requires broad buy-in and the creation of opportunities for dialogue and collaborative work. The Canadian Commission is confident that important work will be done in Belleville and looks forward to supporting and promoting these efforts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMING TOGETHER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

The range of speakers at the event highlights some of the multiple fields of intervention that must be active in anti-discrimination work if we wish to see meaningful and holistic results. Bringing together a broad collection of stakeholders to prepare for membership, obtaining official approval, and then launching our efforts has opened up new possibilities for the City of Belleville. Joining CCMARD has created a space for dialogue and collaboration among these actors on a number of cross cutting issues. The CCMARD framework helps up to shape a common vision for our community and is a framework in which multiple actors can see themselves and the work that they do, reflected. Having the buy-in of such actors throughout the City of Belleville will only further contribute to CCMARD's success in the City and at the national level.