CREATING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH OUR ACTION PLAN

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Brooks is located in South Eastern Alberta along the Trans-Canada Highway and is home to 13,676 residents. Lakeside Packers, a beef processing plant owned by international processing powerhouse JBS, adds over 2,300 jobs to the region with employees being recruited from around the world, giving Brooks a heterogeneous mosaic of cultures. Referred to as the "The City of 100 Hellos" with over 100 languages spoken, Brooks has one of the most culturally diverse per capita populations in Canada.

CCMARD played a dominant role in the creation of the City of Brooks' Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Partnership Plan (2012 – 2014). The City of Brooks used CCMARD's 10 Common Commitments and transformed them into its own unique action plan to combat racism and discrimination. The process through which this action plan was created allowed the City to identify its resources and partnerships to see where improvements could be made and opportunities already existed. Each Common Commitment contains tangible points that the City of Brooks address in order to achieve change. This was one of the hardest parts to convey in the creation of this plan, but the benefit of having something tangible to act upon was phenomenal[1].

Some of the main actions that have been made possible through this Plan include:

- Proclamation of March 21st as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. For the past three years. The City has partnered with a number of different residents and organizations to create a community-wide campaign about the need to combat racism and discrimination in Brooks.

- Proclamation of April 24th as Hate Crimes Awareness Day in 2012 and 2013. For both of these events the City partnered with the Alberta Hate Crimes Committee and delivered a presentation to community members about hate crime and hosted a free community BBQ.

- An effective relationship with its Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was established. RCMP Staff members are very community-oriented and actively involved in the community by attending city events and participating on committees. The RCMP participates in Canada Day and National Aboriginal Day celebrations, Hate Crimes Awareness Day, citizenship ceremonies, and many other special occasions.

- Creation of a full-time Inclusion Coordinator position by City Council in 2012 to monitor, update, and continually work on achieving the goals set out in the Action Plan. City Council has also set aside a Welcoming and Inclusive Communities budget which is used to host events, forums, and other initiatives to promote Brooks as a welcoming and inclusive com-

munity. The City of Brooks has a Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (WIC) staff committee that meets once a month to discuss WIC initiatives and to plan diversity-friendly events. One event the committee just hosted is a seniors' appreciation breakfast on May 30th to kick start Seniors Appreciation Week in Brooks which runs from June 2nd to June 8th. The next upcoming WIC event is a National Aboriginal Day celebration on June 18th in which the City has partnered with several local communities and organizations.

- Created a partnership with the business community to promote equity in the labour market by establishing a business recognition program in 2012. Businesses were asked to apply to be recognized for their diversity-friendly business practices. Selected businesses received recognition at a City Council meeting and their efforts were highlighted in a half page advertisement in the local newspaper.

- Partnered with several organizations and groups to hold different events during the year, including an annual Chinese New Year celebration; a Ramadan celebration, and the Taste of Nations food event. The City is consistently battling segregation in many diverse communities by bringing together population groups/demographics/ethnic communities in comfortable, celebratory, and inclusive settings.

CCMARD have provided the City of Brooks with a guide and its10 Commitments has helped the City to coordinate many of the above mentioned initiatives. The guideline was adjusted specifically to Brooks and has led to the organization of many events and functions that Brooks did not celebrate in the past. Partnerships formed with various social agencies, ethnic community groups, businesses, and other stakeholders can now be mobilized for work on future projects, events, information sessions, and any other forum where the need to eliminate racism and discrimination is at the forefront of the conversation. Many partnerships have been formed since this action plan was created and the value each one of these partnerships brings is incredible.

NOTE

[1] More information on the Partnership Plan can be found under the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities tab on the City of Brooks website, www.brooks.ca.