

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO BOOST INCLUSIVITY

Continued from page 1

in an effort to explore what can be done to better provide Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) in the community with a greater sense of inclusion and belonging. Of the 227 survey respondents, 20 per cent were male while 78 per cent were female.

Eighteen per cent identified as Black, while 27 per cent identified as white, 10 per cent identified as First Nation, Inuit, Métis, 12.5 per cent identified as South Asian and 33 per cent were listed as "other."

The respondents were asked various questions on topics ranging from education, to health care, the justice system and the workplace. One part of the survey asked respondents where they feel most and least included within Halton Region.

While many respondents said they felt comfortable in their residential areas and some said they feel comfortable and included

everywhere in Halton this was not universal.

"For those who self-identified as racialized, they indicated some neighbourhoods feel particularly inaccessible, especially Oakville (south east) and Burlington," the report reads.

"Georgetown was also noted as extremely exclusionary for racialized individuals."

On the other hand, the survey found some respondents who identify as white, indicated they felt a greater sense of exclusion as racialized and other "non-English speaking" families moved into "their" neighbourhood, particularly in Milton.

Other survey findings included most respondents feeling their local municipality could do a much better job of having cultural events, festivals, sporting events, ethnic food vendors and hair salons more representative of them.

The survey reportedly found considerable division among respondents on the subject of education.

"Some respondents felt that the education system in Halton Region was both implicitly and explicitly biased against those who are non-white, non-heterosexual and from non-nuclear families. Their interpretation is that racism is systemic through the education system," the report reads.

"Some respondents argued the 'All Lives Matter' rhetoric and stated 'wokeness has gone overboard.' These individuals argued that every time we focus on a specific community, we are prone to more prejudice and hate. Multiple respondents lashed out at allowing gender and sexual diversity to be brought into the classroom, arguing that allowing children to believe it was OK to be 'not normal' will 'ruin' the family unit."

On the subject of health care, respondents pointed to the need for care outside of regular business hours, especially for people living in poverty who cannot afford to take time off work to

seek medical attention.

Providing free and immediate access to mental health care workers was also described by respondents as a crucial part of having a healthier society.

When it comes to the workplace, most respondents recognized bias may exist in hiring practices and that international credentials — other than North American — are undervalued.

"The Belonging and Racial Identity in Halton report is both timely and revealing," said Andrew Tyrrell, president of the Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton.

"It validates what we already know at the CCAH based on the lived experience of our members — BIPOC residents feel less of a sense of belonging and inclusion in Halton than others for multiple reasons. We believe that the recommendations in this report provide a firm launch pad for institutions to reimagine what the municipal health

care, political, justice and education systems, and workplaces look and feel like for BIPOC folks who often feel excluded and voiceless in these spaces. As a region and as good neighbours, we all need to engage in dialogue to bridge 'tensions' and find a common ground to maintain harmony in spite of our differences."

Some of the recommendations made by the survey respondents included:

- Mandatory workshops/classes for all parents and children in the Halton school system on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion.

- Expanding recreation and leisure centre classes to include different forms of dance such as Bollywood, sarang folk, calypso, hopak, traditional Indigenous dances and music classes such as African drumming or Hindi singing lessons.

- More shared green space at publicly accessible parks for culturally and ethnically diverse individuals

to come together in more organic ways. This could include sporting events, a live entertainment space for cultural events, and frequent and inclusive festivals where people's food, arts and music can be shared with the entire community.

- More diverse mentorship opportunities and business grants.

- More transparency from Halton police regarding complaints and allegations made against its officers.

To read the report in its entirety, visit www.ccah.ca/uploads/6/8/1/2/68129185/belonging-report-web-o.pdf.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With the recent release of the Belonging And Racial Identity in Halton report, we wanted to examine the study's findings, local reaction and the recommendations made to make the region more inclusive.



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WHAT'S ON

URBAN AND INDIGENOUS VOICES NEEDED

Can you lend your thoughts to help make Halton more inclusive?

Grandmother's Voice is seeking urban and In-

igenous voices to participate in a conversation about transforming the region toward an inclusive, respectful and cul-

turally healing community for Indigenous Peoples.

Collectively, participants can plan Seven Generations from now,

determining what needs to be different and what needs to stay the same at a special gathering Nov. 21.

The vision is for Halton to be the place for Indigenous Peoples to live, work and heal together in community.

Hosted by Grandmother's Voice and facilitated by Mary Medcalf and Cheryl Taggart, the gathering is sponsored by Heritage Canada.

It takes place from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Grambel Barn at Country Heritage

Park (8560 Tremaine Rd., Milton). Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided.

To register or for more information, visit grandmothersvoice.com/gathering.

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