



Our vision and hope for the future

We all want a community where residents and visitors feel safe, respected, and comfortable in being themselves and expressing all aspects of their identities. We want a community where each and every person feels accepted, connected, free of barriers and has a real sense of belonging.

Unfortunately, the harsh reality is that this is not experienced by all people who live in or visit our community. But we are not alone in this. Racism is an issue that is happening across Ontario, Canada and the world.

What does racism look like and sound like in our community? Here are just a few examples:

- Racist actions have been experienced by people of all ages in our community.
- We have removed racist hate speech from Municipal facilities.
- We have removed white supremacist posters from buildings in downtown Kincardine.
- We have heard children as young as 7 experiencing racism in municipal programs by children of the same age.
- We have heard how people of colour are afraid to visit our community because if they had car trouble or if they need other services that they would not feel safe reaching out.
- People of power are using social media platforms and media to deflect and deny that we have racism in our community and instead are supporting the status quo.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of what we have heard or have witnessed. As a community we want to be better than that. We want to be leaders that support inclusion, value diversity,

remove inequities and be the most accessible community in Canada. We want everyone to feel safe, included and have a great sense of belonging to the community.

Most people do not intend or want to be racist.

Lets' start by looking at the term racism. In general we tend to define racism as a personal character trait, something mean and cruel done by mean and cruel people, usually involving explicit and open hostility toward people of color. But this interpretation of racism is actually incorrect. Racism is a reflection of the society that you were raised in - it is built into our systems and culture and it is unavoidable. Racism is *not* an individual character trait but it often shows up in our behaviour and our attitudes. Racism is a spectrum that we all exist on. You are not anti-racist or overt racist. We all fall on the spectrum depending on how much we have learned in our journey about our own unconscious bias (See diagram 2).

If we spend our energy defending that we are not racist it robs us of:

- the capacity to listen with openness to People of Colour
- we are not able to examine our biases so we can move on the spectrum
- we can't think critically about the systems we are part of that continue to perpetuate exclusion and racism.

So if we all want this inclusive community, why are there comments against the creation of a mural that will depict one segment of our community – Black and Racialized communities?

When confronted by racism, or any comment that reflects that there are systemic barriers, it is common that we react with defensiveness or hostility, we deny there is a problem, we stay silent, we divert the issue, we label the person or group as trouble makers or simply want and hope the issue will go away.

This is quite common and a natural reaction of white people, including people who are supporters of anti-black and anti-Indigenous racism. This is rooted in our history and perpetuated in our systems.

Changing society and eliminating racism from our culture and our systems is uncomfortable messy work but if we push through the discomfort the change we are all seeking can happen.



Why should we need to proceed with this mural portraying Black and racialized communities? Because...

- We want to welcome Black and racialized communities who visit Kincardine.
- Black and racialized residents want to see themselves in the art work in our community.
- We stand by people of Indigenous, Black and people of colour to help their voices become heard. We see that there has been trauma and hurt that continues to impact community members.
- We want to visibly show that we have listened and are supporting the Black community even though we have more to learn, listen and do.
- The status quo is not an option we want to perpetuate. We want a community where everyone feels safe, welcome and belongs.
- We recognize that racism is present in our systems, processes and work and we need to work together as a community to address racism and make meaningful impact.
- We are committed to learn the history and lean into discomfort that comes with the awareness.
- We want to engage in meaningful, intentional collaboration and dialogue with the community.
- The mural is one demonstrated action to show that as Municipal government we are working on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA)

White silence harms.

- White privilege allows people to stay quiet; to not be aware of what is happening to Black, Indigenous, People of Colour.
- People of Colour notice the silence.
- We don't want to be silent any more.

As a public service organization Municipal Council can leverage their platform to talk about this, to keep the conversations going today, and every day, until there is justice. Council can use their privilege and position to advocate and show support for People of Colour.

This mural will be an invitation for our community to do our own work in unpacking racism and how we all need to engage in the deep, personal work of unraveling how this is shows up in our systems, organizations, neighbourhoods and day to day life.

We hope you join the dialogue and engage in your own journey to learning.



Diagram 2: Spectrum (ladder) of racism

(Source: Adapted from Ellen Tuzzolo (2016); Mary Julia Cooksey Cordero (2019); The Conscious Kid (2020)).

