



**React to Racism: Youth Challenge & Forum**

**University of Winnipeg, March 21, 2013**

## **Final Report**

Submitted by

**Bruce & Boivin Consulting Group Inc.**



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## Executive Summary

The *React to Racism* project, aimed at bringing Manitoba youth together to discuss racism and brainstorm solutions, consisted of an online contest, the React to Racism Youth Challenge, which encouraged youth to speak up against racism and discrimination through artistic expression, and the React to Racism Youth Forum, which took place in Winnipeg on March 21, 2013. These two activities were built around the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, when thousands of people around the world participate in a global discussion to end racism.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) partnered with the University of Winnipeg, Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services Inc. (NEEDS), the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba (TRCM), Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, Seven Oaks School Division, the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties (MARL), Ka Ni Kanichihk, Manitoba Education, and the Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD).

The React to Racism Youth Challenge garnered 70 submissions from individuals and groups in Manitoba under the categories of artwork, the writing, and multimedia. The winners and runners-up in each category include:

Artwork: Winner, Nicole Woodland for *Equality* and Runner-up, Cody Koloski for *Diversville*

Written: Winner, Alexandra Doherty for “Anita’s Story” and Runner-up, Juzlynn Remetilla for “The Colour of My Skin”

Multimedia: Winner, Deep Boyzz for their music video “One People” and Runner-up, the Grade 10 Broadcast/Media Arts Class at Tec Voc High School for the short documentary “Seven Words”

The React to Racism Youth Forum was designed to engage youth in an interactive dialogue to meet the following objectives:

- Recognizing racism, both individual and institutional,
- Learning the language to talk about racism,
- Developing concrete steps to use when encountering racism in their lives, and
- Gaining the confidence to continue the discussion in their classrooms.

Participants in the forum came from several school divisions across Manitoba and youth-centred organizations.

The overall aim of the dialogue was to respond to the question “*what can we do to end racial discrimination?*” This was accomplished through facilitated small group sessions, lead by members of the Youth Peacebuilding Project at Menno Simons College, and other volunteer facilitators. The discussions provided a comfortable, safe and respectful environment to enable youth participation. Key outcomes of this dialogue brought to light that racism in schools is a real and current issue in many of the students’ lives.

Suggested strategies for reacting to racism included the creation of mentorship opportunities and student dialogue clubs. These clubs would help students recognize racism and stereotypes as well as create a safe space for students to be themselves and discuss racism in a constructive way. Participants said that it was hard to lecture friends who use racist language and that storytelling was a more effective method of knowledge transference regarding the hurt and shame that racism causes. Students developed the term “respectful curiosity” as a way to engage newcomers or individuals of different cultural backgrounds in order to foster a more welcoming environment. Students acknowledged that some racist remarks and jokes are the product of misunderstanding. The best response to racism is to ask the individual why they think that way and explain that racist jokes are not funny. Finally, participants indicated the need for additional information about institutional or systemic racism. Additional strategies can be found in the Facilitated Discussion Findings section on page 9.

## **React to Racism**

The *React to Racism* project consisted of a contest, the React to Racism Youth Challenge, and an event, the React to Racism Youth Forum. The objective of both the challenge and the forum was to raise awareness about racism amongst Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth ages 14 to 20, get them talking about racism and, ultimately, hear their views on the question: “*what can we do to end racial discrimination?*”

### **React to Racism Youth Challenge**

The React to Racism Youth Challenge encouraged youth to speak up against racism and discrimination through artistic expression, using the categories of artwork, the writing, and multimedia projects. Submissions were made to an interactive website, [www.reacttoracism.ca](http://www.reacttoracism.ca). Cash prizes were presented to the winners and runners-up in each category at the forum on March 21.

The online challenge garnered 70 submissions from youth speaking up against racism and discrimination. The contest was open from December 4, 2012 until February 15, 2013 to Manitoba residents aged 14 to 20; both individuals and groups were able to submit entries. Please see the challenge website for more information: [www.reacttoracism.ca](http://www.reacttoracism.ca).

Youth were invited to submit a written piece up to 1000 words; artwork including but not limited to paintings, photography, sketches, beadwork and sculpture; and videos and audio recordings, including documentary, photography, spoken word, song, monologue, or dance, up to three minutes long.

Submissions reflected the youths’ experiences and ideas about racial discrimination and how society can work together to end it. Submissions addressed one or both of these questions:

- How has racism affected me?
- How can we fight racism?

Awards were presented to the winners and runners-up in each category at the forum. For more information, see the detailed Agenda section below.

### **React to Racism Youth Forum**

The React to Racism Youth Forum, held March 21, 2013, brought together 97 students from

schools throughout Manitoba. Targeted organizations and educational institutions were asked to nominate participants between the ages of 14 to 20. Please see Appendix A for the full list of schools, and organizations.

The objective of the forum was to hear the views of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth on racism and ending racial discrimination. The forum was designed to engage participants in an inter-youth dialogue aimed at enabling them to recognize racism, both at an individual and institutional level, learn the language to talk about racism, develop concrete steps to use when encountering racism in their lives, and gain the confidence to continue the discussion with their peers.

## **Youth Forum Agenda**

### **Opening Prayer**

The Elder for the event, Myra Laramee, is a member of Fisher River Cree Nation. She worked as an educator in the Inner City for 31 years and an instructor for the University of Manitoba for 16 years. She retired in 2007, after having served as vice-principal at Hugh John MacDonald Junior High for 3 years and Principal of Niji Mahkwa Elementary School for 12 years. She is currently an Aboriginal Awareness Consultant with the Province of Manitoba.

Elder Laramee began the day with a prayer and a song. She explained that her name, Niioojahbawiiik, means Woman Who Sits in the Centre of the Four Directions and said that she has waited her whole life for a day like today, when young people would convene to discuss strategies aimed at overcoming and ending racism.

### **Keynote Speaker Wab Kinew**

The first keynote speaker and emcee, Wab Kinew, established the tone for the day. Wab is the Director of Indigenous Inclusion at the University of Winnipeg, has a BA in Economics and follows the traditional ways of the Midewin Society.

Wab Kinew spoke about the effects of institutional racism on the individual. He painted a picture of Aboriginal communities as portrayed in the media that is at odds with the childhood rich in tradition and happiness that he experienced. Wab, however, was not immune to racism and he shared anecdotes of the adversity and discrimination he faced growing up. Wab concluded by reminding participants that “those things which unite us are greater than those that divide us.”

## **Award Presentation**

Following the keynote speaker, James Wilson, Treaty Relations Commissioner, presented the first award to the winner and runner-up of the youth contest in the artwork category to Nicole Woodland for her painting, *Equality*, and to Cody Koloski for his drawing, *Diversville*.

Kwabena Osei-Bonsu, with the Winnipeg Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD), presented the winner and runner-up awards in the writing category to Alexandra Doherty for her pieces “Anita’s Story” and Juzlynn Remetilla, for “The Colour of My Skin.”

The University of Winnipeg’s Associate Vice-President of Indigenous, Government, and Community Affairs, Jennifer Rattray, presented the awards for the winner and runner-up in the multimedia category to Deep Boyzz for their music video “One People,” and to the Grade 10 Broadcast/Media Arts Class at Tec Voc High School for their short documentary “Seven Words.”

See Appendix B for more information on the React to Racism Youth Challenge Submissions.

## **Keynote Speaker Crystal Anne Leach**

Crystal Anne Leach, a proud Metis Woman, 29, was born and raised in Winnipeg’s north end. A graduate of St. John’s High School, she later enrolled in Education with the University of Winnipeg. Crystal has been working as a positive mentor with youth in the Inner City since the age of 16.

Crystal currently works for the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre as the Coordinator of the Future Is Yours program that helps youth gain valuable skills and training to increase their employability. Most importantly, the program gives youth the opportunity to set goals towards pursuing a healthy and positive lifestyle.

Crystal touched on the institutional racism that Aboriginal people experience in the media, the courts, schools and other institutions. She told stories of individual racism that the youth in her *Future Is Yours* group shared, including a young woman who was racially profiled while shopping and a young man whose classmates made him feel so ashamed that he hid his burka-clad mother from them. She explained that experiences with racism result in feelings of anger and that we “judge ourselves when other people judge us.” To conclude her presentation, Crystal shared a number of strategies that her youth group had come up with, including:

- Eliminate hate speech and racist remarks from your vocabulary, including us/them language

- Teach your children tolerance and respect in the home
- Stand up for yourself and others
- Set an example in your own life
- Experience other cultures

### **Facilitated Discussion Groups**

To support an open, honest and non-judgmental dialogue, participants were divided into 16 pre-selected small groups. Each group had a facilitator and note-taker to keep the dialogue focused and record key discussion points and themes. The facilitators comprised of individual volunteers and members of the Youth Peacebuilding Project at Menno Simons College, University of Winnipeg. The Youth Peacebuilding Project also provided React to Racism lanyards for all forum participants.

The facilitated discussions sought to answer the question “*what can we do to end racial discrimination?*” through an inter-youth dialogue of the following guiding and probing questions:

- What are individual and institutional racism?
- Where do you see them in your community?
- Why do these forms of racism happen?
- Have you experienced racism? Do you think that you have ever acted or thought in a racist way?

To build on the discussion, youth were then asked to discuss:

- What can you do to end individual and institutional racism?
  - What can you say when you hear a racist remark?
  - What can you do when you see racism in social media?
  - How can you show you don’t support racism?
  - What are some things you can do to address racism?
- Are there steps you have already taken to respond to racism?
- How can we help create a welcoming environment for everyone?
- How do we keep the conversation going at our schools and with friends?
- What kind of positive message would you like to send to people in Manitoba, including your parents, peers and teachers

Outcomes from the facilitated sessions can be found in Facilitated Discussion Findings below.



## **Entertainment**

Entertainment was carefully selected to promote and expose participants to different cultural groups. An African youth group, the Peaceful Village Drum Group, opened the event. During lunch, participants were entertained with a performance by the Aboriginal School of Dance. The piece, “Wohitika,” explored multicultural similarities through the art of music, dance, health and fitness. At the end of the day, Steven Currie, an improviser, poet, and “all around chatterer” from Winnipeg, read his slam poem to participants. The transcript of his poem, Punchline, is included as Appendix F.

## **React to Racism Artifact and Closing**

The Social Justice Club from West Kildonan Collegiate, a student-led group focused on making a difference in their local and global communities one project at a time, introduced the artifact creation exercise. Students were invited to create pieces for the React to Racism Artifact while reflecting in their small groups. The exercise, which used multi-coloured pieces of paper shaped like people, aimed to get youth speaking about racism while acknowledging the beauty of diversity.

Following the summary of the facilitated sessions by Nicki Ferland of AMR Planning & Consulting, Elder Myra Laramée, closed the day with a blessing.

## **Facilitated Discussion Findings**

### Individual and Institutional Racism – What it Is and Why it Happens

Students reported that individual racism was based on the belief that another race is inferior to others or one's own race and that it could be directed towards another person or group as well as oneself. They explained that in some cases, a person may accept the stereotypes about their own culture.

The students noted that racism occurs as a result of a lack of knowledge and learned prejudices that often appear as hateful and hurtful language. They mentioned that racism is a form of intolerance and discrimination based on a person's religion, background, nationality, heritage or skin colour.

Students felt that racism is something that everyone experiences, not just visible minorities, and something that happens everywhere. Students mentioned that they had seen racism on the internet, the television, on buses, sports teams, with older generations of family and at school, in particular.

They mentioned that peer pressure, fear and jealousy might explain why some people used racist language. Others may be joking and not intending to hurt others when they behave a certain way.

A number of students had a lack of knowledge and understanding with regards to institutional or systemic racism. Others mentioned that institutional racism is pervasive stereotyping, hidden within society and the media that teaches people to believe and act in a certain way towards other groups.

Students mentioned that institutional racism was apparent in the government, schools, the transportation system and the justice system, in particular. They felt that the government played a role in influencing both the media and the general public, which explains why there may be more racism in certain regions. Students noted that the Indian Residential School system was an example of institutional racism.

### Strategies to End Individual and Institutional Racism

Students brainstormed a number of strategies aimed to combat racism. Students reported that if someone is experiencing racism in the school or workplace, there are strategies that they can use personally: they can ignore those people; get staff and/or faculty involved; or react in a

frame of wanting to understand where the stereotype came from, instead of reacting in anger, and in doing so, be an example for others of acceptance.

Students felt that people who make racist remarks in a joking or non-threatening way do so as a product of misunderstanding and that the best response is asking them why they think that way and explaining that racist jokes are not funny.

Students were divided on whether to ignore racism or confront it. Most students were adamant that people should stand up for themselves or for someone who is being targeted. Students mentioned that some people can feel ashamed when you point out racism in a comment they made; they suggested the use of storytelling to talk about racism with others. Storytelling promotes empathy and enables listeners to consider the perspectives and experiences of others.

Students noted that if the act of racism occurs on the internet or a social networking site, it can be deleted, flagged or reported to the authorities of facebook or twitter, for example.

Students also brainstormed ways of preventing racism and promoting tolerance. Students felt that they should keep the conversation going and work together to prevent racism. They felt that critical thinking and communication skills would help; listening and being empathetic were strategies to support understanding and compassion, while asking questions and not believing everything you hear could help address the myths and stereotypes that feed racism.

Students also felt that cultural education is integral to resolving racism, stating “ignorance breeds prejudice.” They also mentioned that parents should begin these types of conversations in the home early with their children; parents should be open and communicate about racism and its consequences. Students noted that a parent’s guidance could influence a young person’s attitude and behaviour towards racism.

Students reported that ending institutional racism was more difficult, that it would take community action, but that the best solution is to work inside the system to affect change from within. Students felt that the media should be encouraged to be more positive and address racism within their organizations. They also suggested enacting new laws, letter writing campaigns or petitions, making presentations and starting anti-racism clubs.

### Keeping the Conversation Going in Our Classrooms

Students reported that they should become positive voices for change. Students mentioned that they would share their experiences from this forum and tell their friends, classmates and

parents the stories they had learned. They also suggested making posters and presentations to share information.

Students stated that events should take place in schools that allow for interactive discussion and that celebrate cultures, such as Multi-Cultural Days. They suggested that awareness-raising activities be integrated into the curriculum. Students also said there should be spaces in schools where students were able to be themselves, express themselves openly and discuss racism. Students also mentioned mentor groups and school clubs.

They suggested being more inclusive in social groups at schools and making a plan with friends about how to react to racism should it arise.

Students noted that ways to create a welcoming environment for everyone, newcomers and minorities in particular, include not judging others, reaching out and demonstrating that you are open to getting to know newcomers, showing respect and having a good attitude, and treating everyone equally. Students coined the term “respectful curiosity” as a way to foster a welcoming environment; respectful curiosity is a way to engage with and learn about newcomers or individuals of different cultural backgrounds by asking respectful questions out of genuine curiosity and without preconceptions.

#### Positive Messages for People in Manitoba

Students reported that music or social media can help spread the word about racism to other young people in Manitoba. They suggested a number of positive messages for the peoples in Manitoba, including their parents, peers and teachers:

- Every colour is beautiful
- Racism isn't cool
- Respect everyone and everything
- People are different, look deeper
- Knowledge is power
- Stop Racism!
- Be curious (safe, respectful curiosity); strive for mutual understanding
- Be yourself
- If you aren't part of the solution, you're part of the problem
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you

## Summary of Evaluation Feedback

Eight chaperones and 64 participants at the React to Racism Youth Forum, including students, note-takers and facilitators, completed evaluation forms. Chaperones and participants were asked to answer a series of questions that ranked certain elements of the event on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 having the highest value.

Element (number of responses, average)	5	4	3	2	1
Success of the event (71, 4.78)	78.9%	16.9%	1.4%		
First Keynote Speaker, Wab Kinew (69, 4.84)	84.1%	15.9%			
Second Keynote Speaker, Crystal Anne Leach (71, 4.62)	71.8%	18.3%	9.9%		
Emcee, Wab Kinew (62, 4.89)	88.71%	11.29%			
Venue (64, 4.31)	53.1%	29.7%	9.4%	6.3%	
Food (63, 4.64)	73.0%	19.1%	4.8%		1.6%

The event was deemed a success with an average rating of 4.81 out of 5. Youth reported that the forum was a great experience, that it was great to meet new people and hear about their experiences with racism, and that they learned a lot about racism, how it affects people and how to stop it. One chaperone responded that “anytime we can engage students in discussions that are working towards positive change is worthwhile.”

Wab Kinew was the first keynote speaker and emcee for the event. Chaperones reported that they appreciated the stories of his family and childhood; they noted that he was personable and engaging with the audience. Youth liked how he talked about his childhood and experiences with racist people. Participants found him easy to relate to and noted that his stories were inspiring and very funny. A few participants mentioned that their favourite part of his introduction was getting the chance to sing “Happy Birthday” in Ojibway.

The second keynote speaker was Crystal Anne Leach. Participants enjoyed the stories she told, and commented that she did really well for a first time speaker despite her anxiety. Most liked that her stories were realistic and happened first hand to her and those in her youth group. They felt she was down to earth and relatable, but especially liked that she offered solutions for dealing with racism.

Chaperones were asked to comment on the afternoon Sharing Circle with Elder Myra Laramée. Chaperones reported that the Sharing Circle was a great experience where they learned ways to teach students about racism, while others noted that they would have liked more time and that the Circle was very specific to Aboriginal people.

Most students felt they had an idea of how to respond to racism following the event. One student stated “other people talked about some of their ideas, so you end up leaving with other peoples' great ideas as well as your own!” They felt the roundtable discussions had provided them with an opportunity to hear others’ opinions, experiences and ideas about how to end racism. One student said they would stop making jokes aimed at their own culture and other cultures as a result of what they had learned. Students also commented on how welcoming and open the facilitators and note-takers at their tables were.

Youth were asked what they liked best about the event. Responses ranged from listening to others' experiences and thoughts on racism to a specific performance, like the slam poet, the Aboriginal School of Dance performance at lunch and the Peaceful Village Drum Group. Participants also mentioned the keynote speakers’ stories, the artifact creation activity and the food. The majority of responses emphasized the facilitated small group discussions as the best part of the event.

Finally, all participants were asked to comment on what should stay and what should go if another event was convened. Chaperones provided the following comments:

- While the students are working, have something for the chaperones to do (book displays, working groups, etc.)
- Keep the Sharing Circle
- Spread the speakers out throughout the day; maybe have youth speakers that the students can relate to
- Extend notice about the deadline for the React to Racism Youth Challenge
- Have table discussions for teachers to share ideas amongst schools
- Have at least one keynote speaker who is non-Aboriginal

The additional comments offered by the students included:

- Everything should stay the same!
- Call up other participants who had submitted their ideas for the React to Racism Youth Challenge for a group photo
- Have third place winners for the React to Racism Youth Challenge

- Award presentations should be towards the end of the day
- Should be able to group with someone from your own school
- Should have a cultural event where everyone gets a chance to represent their culture through dance, song, poems, etc.

## Appendix A: Final Registration List

### Winnipeg Schools in attendance included:

- Earl Grey
- Issac Brock
- David Livingstone
- Cecil Rhodes
- William Whyte
- Tec Voc High School
- Elmwood High School
- Lord Selkirk
- Warren Collegiate
- Dakota Collegiate
- College St. Norbert Collegiate
- West Kildonan Collegiate Institute
- MET
- Garden City Collegiate
- Maples Collegiate
- College Sturgeon Heights Collegiate
- RB Russell
- Vincent Massey Collegiate
- Linden Christian School
- Mile MacDonell Collegiate
- Sisler High School
- Churchill High School
- John Pritchard School

### Winnipeg Organizations in attendance included:

- Ka Ni Kanichihk
- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itate Centre Inc.
- Broadway Neighbourhood Centre

### Rural Schools in attendance included:

- Mel Johnson School
- Helen Betty Osbourne Ininiw Education Resource Centre
- Norway House High School
- Vincent Massey High School
- Rossburn Collegiate

### Northern Communities in attendance included:

- Bloodvein First Nation
- Brokenhead First Nation
- Opaskweyak Cree Nation
- Sapotweyak Cree Nation
- Sioux Valley Cree Nation



## Appendix B: React to Racism Youth Challenge Submissions

### Artwork Submissions

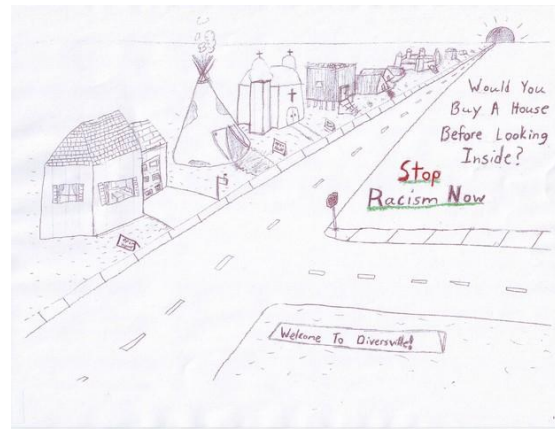
Kerby	<i>No to Racism</i>
Miguel	<i>We are all equals!</i>
Clarice Ann	<i>Racism is Everywhere</i>
Joemar	<i>Will You React or Ignore?</i>
Philip	<i>Racism is Bad</i>
Nicole	<i>Equality</i>
Fabrice	<i>We are all equal</i>
Cody	<i>Educate Yourself About Racism</i>
Sarah	<i>Know Me Before You Judge Me-Let's End Racism.</i>

Asmani	<i>See the Whole World and Connect to Others</i>
Cody	<i>Diversville</i>
Darwin	<i>stop racism</i>
Danielle	<i>Hate to Love</i>
Josh	<i>We Stand Together</i>
Nicholas	<i>Why can't we come together as one!</i>
Bessie	<i>We Are All Equal</i>
Jonathan	<i>LET US UNITE AS FRIENDS</i>
Calida	<i>Looking At Similarities, Not Differences</i>

**Artwork Winner: Equality by Nicole**



**Runner-up: Diversville by Cody**



## Writing Submissions

Samantha	<i>For the better</i>
Garrett	<i>React To Racism</i>
Amrit	<i>Racism</i>
Emilee	<i>React To racism</i>
joelyne	<i>Racist? If so, why?</i>
Juzlynn	<i>The Colour of my Skin</i>
Hannah	<i>This Is Enough.</i>
Caleb	<i>Racism (Acrostic Poem)</i>
Telisa	<i>Hand in Hand</i>
Kadie	<i>React To Racism: We Can All Make a Change</i>
Marianne	<i>Lets Stop That Thing... Called Racism</i>
Rita	<i>Words Of Racism</i>
Michael	<i>How to stop racism</i>
Shauna	<i>Racism</i>
Megan	<i>Taking a stand...</i>
Teal	<i>How to respond to racism.</i>
Sarah	<i>Stop The Racism Before It Happens</i>

Alexandra	<i>Anita's Story</i>
Trevor	<i>End Racism</i>
Kyle	<i>Just Like A Rainbow</i>
Brianna	<i>My Poem for Racism</i>
Cheyenne	<i>How racism has affected me.</i>
Catherine	<i>The Road to Ending Racism</i>
Ginger	<i>My Life.</i>
Mahesh	<i>The truth on Racism</i>
Edrian	<i>What Racism Has Done and How to Try to Fix It</i>
Michał	<i>The Same</i>
Agnis	<i>Racism</i>
Joahna Valerie	<i>Racism</i>
Élise	<i>Stop racism's for the future</i>
Emily	<i>We are all equal people</i>
Adam	<i>Killing the Indian Child</i>
Amber	<i>Break On Through</i>
Besta	<i>it is a story about my friend</i>

### **Winner: Anita's Story by Ally**

The loud ringing of a familiar tango jolted me awake. I retreated underneath my pillow. I groaned as I pulled the lead phone to my ear. I could hardly make out what was being said, but I knew what the call was about.

"Be right there," I grumbled. I rolled out of bed and glanced at the clock. 1:45 am. Ugh.

I had a few minutes so I sat in my car and let my mind wander. I thought about the moment that I decided to be a nurse and couldn't remember why I wanted it so badly then. It was a cramped place for immense thoughts but my mind was too tired to stop them.

The sterile white walls stretched onwards for decades as I approached the room that my patient would be in. I had been given a briefing on her condition. Cirrhosis of the liver. She had ignored it for too long and it caused kidney failure. She wasn't expected to last until morning.

I took a deep breath and stepped into the room.

A Native American woman, who I guessed to be about 60, was the only one in the beige room. I assumed that she was sleeping but at hearing my footsteps she turned to face me.

"Hello, my name is Karen, I'll be taking care of you tonight" I said as I inspected the IV bags on the stand.

"It's nice to meet you, I'm Anita," She said weakly. The disease had taken its toll on her, her chocolate brown eyes had begun to take on a yellowish tinge along with her once copper skin. It was clear that she was close to death.

It was always difficult trying to make small talk with a patient who was in such a precarious state of life, where little occurrences didn't mean a whole lot. She was facing the idea of eternity and I was going to try and talk about the weather?

"Can you get the doctor for me? I want to know what exactly happened in the surgery," she said, breaking the short silence.

"Oh, of course," I said. I was a little surprised that she hadn't already been told. I checked to see who her surgeon was. Dr. Smith. Ugh.

"Excuse me Doctor," I said sheepishly as I approached him in the main office. I asked him what she wanted to know.

"Her liver damage caused her to have kidney failure." He said quite simply.

I stood there for a few moments expecting him to leave the office to speak with the patient but he just stood there with his eyebrows raised. He expected me to relay the message.

On returning to the room I told the patient what the doctor told me, and she began asking questions that I couldn't answer. The doctor still didn't come to talk to her though.

"Listen," Anita said after this ridiculous relaying had gone on for some time. "I know that I don't look like someone who is worth helping..."

"It's not that," I protested "It's just that he's just..." a jerk "...Busy at the moment. I'll get him."

I found the doctor, chatting away to the nurse at the desk about the weather.

"Excuse me," I said.

"What is it?" he replied angrily.

"The patient would really like to speak with you,"

"I don't have time,"

"It will only take a couple minutes..."

"I don't have a couple minutes to waste on someone who has clearly destroyed their own liver with alcohol" He snapped.

"I didn't know that was the cause..." I said, shocked. What I didn't say was that it didn't matter, a woman was dying, the least he could do is explain to her what was going on.

"Isn't it obvious?" He said.

"What?" I said but he didn't answer. I remembered now that her health information didn't specify the cause. There was no mention of alcohol.

I returned to the room in quiet defeat.

"He's very busy..." I said weakly.

She simply sighed and shook her head. There was a wordless conversation that passed between me and the dying woman, where I told her what the doctor said and she told me that she was used to it.

“Come sit here,” Anita said gesturing to the chair beside her bed. “Let me tell you a story,”

She began to tell me the story of her life. She told me a remarkable story starting with her childhood. A childhood full of colour and fire. Of nature. She told me of the legends that were passed down from who-knows-how-many years, from the beginning of time it seems. As a child she loved birds and the freedom that they had, always moving and always knowing where they should go.

Then she was taken away. The people came and took her from her family and put her in schools to teach her how to be white. She lost her family all at once simply because someone didn’t understand her way of life. She told stories of abuse and injustice.

As a young adult she rebelled. Getting into things that she shouldn’t. “who hasn’t made mistakes” she said of the life that she had now left behind. She caused a lot of damage then, but one day she was reborn into her own way of life.

As the night continued I felt anger towards the doctor and I decided to tell him, and everyone, Anita’s story, so they knew what damage could be caused by this prejudice that is so often overlooked. I remembered then, why I had wanted to be a nurse; I wanted to help people, and learn things that I didn’t know before.

The sun was just beginning to push itself over the horizon as she concluded her story. Birdsong sounded from outside the window as a group of sparrows flew past. Her lips pulled into a smile as she closed her eyes for the last time.

## **Runner-Up: The Colour of My Skin by Juzlynn**

Name something that is brown.

Name four.

Now, name me; I am brown.

Now, out of the five things you have named, which one, do you think, is most hated for it?

Do not answer. Not yet.

I am brown, but I am also smart.

I also possess five senses, like most humans.

Do you know what this means?

It means that I can hear you; I can see you.

I know what you are doing, and I do not like it.

You see, it is because I have feelings too.

It breaks my heart, because I do have a heart.

I also have 206 bones within my body, roughly 600 eyelashes, and supposedly 1000000000 brain cells.

You probably do too.

Do you know where I am getting at?

We are not different, not entirely.

We may possess the same interests.

We may even like the same music.

But the colour of my skin is all it takes for you to reject me; you label me:  
FOB. Stupid. Alien.

And I am not.

How I speak is none of your business. I am literate. I am here.

And maybe this is because I am not the only one who is brown.

There are millions of people who look like me, and that is all, so you choose to compare me to them.

And your comparison quickens your conclusion. It covers any compassion you could have had towards me. It exercises caution.

So you stay away from me.

Because I am brown, I am not only different, I am wrong.

“Well, if you put it that way. But...”

No. Stop.

Do not blame this on your upbringing. Do not blame this on the media. Do not blame this on anyone.

Sooner or later, you will have to think for yourself, and by that time my skin will still be brown.

And by that time, I still will not get to choose how you interpret me.

I do not, and will not, have a say on how you look at me.

I am not sure if I will ever get the chance to look you in the eye and feel equality.

But I know who I am, and I know I am better than your words.

And I know that words have no meaning unless they are heard, and my ears are closed.

I know. I am.

You can now answer the question.

## Multimedia Submissions

Emily	<i>React to Racism</i>
Abdoul, Omar, Florent, Edwin	<i>One People</i>
Amrita, Fabrice, Andy, Khina, Radhika	<i>Smarties</i>
Jodi, Jennifer, and Kyle	<i>Stand Up Against Racism</i>
Hamrin, Luam, Selam, Vete, Hassan, Mina, Joseph	<i>One Race: HUMAN!</i>
Krys, Taylor, Jenessa, Zachary, Jessica, Sadie-Jo	<i>Take a Stand</i>
Behnam	<i>How can we fight Racism?</i>
Ian, Autumn, Taryn, Justin, Leon, Kainen, Halley, Jacob, Archie,	<i>The Seven Words</i>

Alyssia, Chris, Jocelyn	
Blair	<i>Culture-React to Racism</i>
Ainsley, Tasha, Alex, Brenda, Bronson, Tabitha, Josh, Michael	<i>Restoring the Sacred @ Maples Reacts to Racism 2013</i>
Courtney	<i>Put it in Reverse!</i>
Matthew	<i>Let's be together</i>
Nicholas	<i>There's No Master Race</i>
Nana	<i>message to the racist</i>
Jan Nicko	<i>Fighting Racism</i>
Bronson	<i>Racist Problems</i>
Martin & Raj	<i>We are all equal</i>

Please see the winning multimedia submission here: [One People](#) by Deep Boyzz, or at [www.reacttoracism.ca](http://www.reacttoracism.ca).



Please see the runner-up here: [The Seven Words](#) by Grade 10 Broadcasting/Media Arts Class at Tec Voc High School, or at [www.reacttoracism.ca](http://www.reacttoracism.ca).



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## Appendix C: Agenda

React to Racism Youth Forum Agenda		
9:00 am	Registration	
9:15 am	Peaceful Village Drum Group	
9:30 am	Welcoming Remarks and Opening Prayer	Wab Kinew Myra Laramee
9:45 am	Speaker #1	Wab Kinew
10:15 am	Award Presentations	Artwork, Writing, Multimedia
10:45 am	Health Break	
11:00 am	Speaker #2	Crystal Anne Leach
11:30 am	Table Group Discussions	
12:00 pm	Lunch	Provided by CMARD
12:15 pm	Aboriginal School of Dance	
12:45 pm	Discussions	
2:15 pm	Creation of Group Artifact	School Justice Program
2:45 pm	Slam Poet	Steve Currie
2:50 pm	Summary	Nicki Ferland
2:55 pm	Moving Forward	Wab Kinew
3:15 pm	Closing Prayer	Myra Laramee

## Appendix D: Student Evaluation Form

### React to Racism • Feedback & Evaluation Form

1. Was the event a success? Please rank the general quality of the event.



Terrible



So so



Great!

1

2

3

4

5

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2. How did the first keynote speaker, do?



1

2

3

4

5

What did you like best about what the first keynote speaker had to say?

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3. How did the second keynote speaker do?



1

2

3

4

5

What did you like best about what the second keynote speaker had to say?

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4. What about the emcee, Wab Kinew? How did he do?



1

2

3

4

5

What did you like best about what he had to say?

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5. Comfy? How was the venue?



1

2



3

4



5

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6. Thirst quenched? Stomach full? What did you think of the food?



1

2



3

4



5

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7. What did you learn from the roundtable discussions? What did you like best?

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8. As a result of the discussions, do you feel you have some ideas on how you can respond to racism? Why or why not?

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9. What did you like the best overall? 

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10. What about next time? Is there anything that should definitely stay or definitely go for future events?

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Thanks for taking the time to fill me out!

## Appendix E: Chaperone Evaluation Form

### React to Racism • Feedback & Evaluation Form

1. Was the event a success? Please rank the general quality of the event.



Terrible



So so



Great!

1

2

3

4

5

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2. How did the first keynote speaker, Wab Kinew, do?



1

2

3

4

5

What did you like best about what the first keynote speaker had to say?

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3. How did the second keynote speaker do?



1

2

3

4

5

What did you like best about what the second keynote speaker had to say?

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4. Comfy? How was the venue?



1

2

3

4

5

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5. Thirst quenched? Stomach full? What did you think of the food?



1

2



3

4



5

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6. How would you rate the afternoon Sharing Circle session? What did you like best?

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7. As a result of the discussions, do you feel you have some ideas on how you can work with students to respond to racism? Why or why not?

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8. What did you like the best overall?




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9. What about next time? Is there anything that should definitely stay or definitely go for future events?

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Thanks for taking the time to fill me out!

## Appendix F: Punchline by Stephen Currie

### I.

Just ignore them  
Such easy advice  
to let us dodge the price  
that free speech demands we pay  
Just ignore them  
While we stay  
huddled into old familiar holes  
seeing what we want to see  
and hearing the stories we want told  
Meanwhile? Just ignore them.  
It's what my parents told me:  
That I had to battle bullies with blindness  
Like the fools of the world are just there to remind  
us  
How to close our eyes.  
    When our care was papered with flyers  
sporting swastikas  
    Screaming hatred undisguised  
Close our ears  
    To words like *gang* and *war*  
    Which my teachers swore  
    Were illusions just waiting to disappear  
Close our minds  
    Until you grow up and want to make  
trouble  
    And so you become the fool that trouble  
finds

### II.

Because you can't just ignore them,  
not forever,  
Not even for very long.  
And I had the misfortune of getting strong  
Before I ever got too smart.  
So I mastered the art of false courage.  
No More! I would scream to my own shadow  
I will match them: Hate for Hate  
Fear for Fear, Ignorance for Ignorance, Fist for Fist  
And if you've not yet felt, or now forget the mist

Of hormones falling soggy on you brain  
Then what happens next might be hard to explain  
It was awful I know, but bear with me  
I was a slave to testosterone  
An addict of bad decision  
And like anyone who won't think for themselves  
All I wanted was a mission  
So I was on street corners and bad parties  
Seeking out the ignorant, but no longer ignoring  
I was the smiling face in the street fight  
The hero in my own opera  
I was bloody, I was brutal, I was boring  
An overgrown schoolboy embarrassed by riches  
Fighting faceless goons to scratch the itches  
Of his own weakness  
I'd laugh off my lunacy saying:  
    "They had it coming"  
    "I know what I'm doing"  
    "Someone needs to teach them a lesson"  
Like I was some cosmic teacher  
Like between my split lips there was something of  
worth  
Like my broken nose was somehow a sign  
things weren't getting worse.  
Like I could turn violence into poetry.  
But no one can.  
Least of all this thrill-seeker, this hypocrite.  
Saying he wants a world he can raise children in  
to every girl he meets  
While really he's just making a city,  
with blood on the streets.  
    So what to do?  
Because it's true, I do want daughters  
But not so the grow up  
so surrounded by hate they just bury their heads in  
the sand  
And I do want sons,  
but not ones wearing their pride  
like armour leaving it as scarred as their hands  
So what can I tell them?

### III.

Laugh

Don't be ostriches or peacocks  
But eagles soaring over ignorance  
And laugh.  
It will be the bravest thing you ever do  
To conquer anger and fear  
To throw back your head to laugh at your enemies  
But joy is contagious  
It spreads through like minds.  
It wakes up the sleeping,  
and coaxes the scared,  
and soothers the proud.  
If you just laugh-  
not the drunken chuckle laugh track stumble  
of warmed over stereotype sitcom  
But the loose kneed belly hurt  
Laugh to the Heavens.  
The laughter of the winning side.  
  
Listen, bullies want to be demons

They lust over the end of the world,  
the last thing we should do  
Is demonise them.  
Instead, we show them as they are  
Buffoons, Sideshowes, Clowns.  
We know they are too brutal  
To see the pain around them,  
And we laugh because they're also  
Too course to see the joy.  
We know they thing that culture  
Can be contained in their living room,  
And we laugh because it leaves  
The rest of the world for us to explore.  
We can see them foaming at the mouth,  
Rolling in the mud,  
Or talking yesterday's boredoms like a switched off  
rerun  
And we laugh, and we laugh, and we laugh  
Listen  
Ridicule is a tool in everyone's hands  
Laughter is the victory over the many by the few  
And while victors always write the history books,  
Fighters have to write the joke books too.

Stephen Currie, Mar 10, 2013