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# Anti-racism strategy shaped in Thunder Bay

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Posted: Sunday, November 27, 2016 6:00 am | Updated: 10:00 am, Sun Nov 27, 2016.


By Matt Vis, CJ staff | [16 comments](#)

The Ontario minister for anti-racism says issues in Thunder Bay are completely different than the rest of Ontario.

Michael Coteau and the Anti-Racism Directorate held a three-hour open meeting Saturday at the Da Vinci Centre, which was attended by more than 100 people.

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The meeting allowed members of the public to come forward and speak about their perspectives on systemic racism.

"The issues that came up (Saturday) are so different than what we've encountered in other jurisdictions," Coteau said. "There's such a heavy emphasis on the effects of colonization and how it's helped build the system we find here today in Ontario."

Coteau and his ministerial staff have been hosting similar meetings across Ontario as they develop an anti-racism strategy, which they expect to roll out in the spring.

One person who addressed the meeting was Darius Ferris, a band councillor in Constance Lake First Nation.

Ferris said getting a chance to talk to the anti-racism directorate gives indigenous people a voice.

"I think this is an opportunity for us as First Nations people who have been affected by systemic racism and also a lack of government care for First Nations people," Ferris said.

"Especially with education system and also the health-care system. It's not up to par. There's a lack of funding in that area and housing as well."

Ferris said the ongoing mental health and addictions crises in many remote northern communities, and lack of government intervention, are examples of systemic racism.

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"A lot of (our youth) in First Nations communities or within First Nations people ourselves we're caught in this turmoil of addictions," Ferris said.

"We need the government to step up and help us because that's robbing our youth of their future, their health and their lives and everything they can be doing or want to achieve in life like their education, families or careers."

Ferris added there seems to be a growing understanding among non-indigenous people about historical impacts.

Coteau said Education Minister Mitzie Hunter is working on enhancing the curriculum to address the effects of colonization and residential schools, while Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development Deb Matthews is looking at ways of strengthening opportunities for culturally relevant information and sensitivities around learning and historical impacts in post-secondary education.

Coun. Rebecca Johnson, who is a member of the city's anti-racism and respect advisory committee, spoke about initiatives that are taking place in Thunder Bay.

She said it started with city council passing a motion nearly a decade ago acknowledging racism is present.

"I think the first you have to do is admit you have a problem," Johnson said. "If you don't admit you have a problem, we just go in circles doing nothing about it. We identified we had racism. We have racism in Thunder Bay so we're working on that.

"We have a committee, we have people. we have money we're setting aside for this. It's not just a token. We know we have this problem so we're trying to address."

Johnson also called on Coteau and the province to work collaboratively with municipalities and their strategies that have been developed or are being implemented.

"We have an opportunity here to make some input into what's going to happen at the provincial level," Johnson said.

Coteau seemed to be in favour of that idea.

"I think that's something I'm going to recommend we build right into the plan that we need to be able to collect initiatives and ideas," Coteau said. "Know what's happening, keep our ear to the ground, capture that and share it with other jurisdictions so they can benefit off the mistakes and successes of other jurisdictions."

Coteau said developing the provincial plan remains a work in progress, which changes after every session.

"What we learned today is a little different than what we learned yesterday but collectively we'll build a plan that's good for Ontario," Coteau said.

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16 comments:

[Yin and Yang](#) posted at 9:14 am on Mon, Nov 28, 2016.

Posts: 2305

Like I said so many times, if it is green people that are the vast majority of the following, drunks, the vagrants, the majority of robberies, murders, homeless, etcetera. Then how is one prejudice for speaking the truth. This is not racism, it is calling a spade, a spade.

Perhaps we should look at the real root of the problem, it is not racism, it is green leaders who have no idea what to do, who need our help.

We live in a society that is run by a bunch of flakes. A 10th place ribbon, is not an achievement, sexual orientation has replaced the word perversion, green people are destroying are society and making it bad for all, our democracy is run by too many corrupt people, who have the judges and law enforcement under their thumbs, etcetera.

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I too have a dream, that one day an honest person is going to end all this dishonesty and nonsense.

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[john doh](#) posted at 11:52 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 90

So the minister for anti racism says Thunder Bay's issues are different from anywhere else in thunder bay yet the article doesn't clarify what these issues are?

I truly believe us so called "whites" are not racist towards natives, we are just tired of one ethnic group getting billions of dollars from the government, while the rest have to work their butts off to get by.

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[Bikeybikebike](#) posted at 7:59 am on Mon, Nov 28, 2016.

Posts: 27

You're justifying your racism. It's never ok to treat a group of people differently because of the colour of their skin. Ever.

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[Khan](#) posted at 5:56 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 369

@tiger my apologies. I am glad we agree.

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[Tiger](#) posted at 7:53 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 18

no problem.  
I'm glad we agree too.  
the nonsense must end for everyone.

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[June Bug](#) posted at 5:25 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 127

This is NEVER going to END!!.....

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[Puh-Leeze](#) posted at 4:39 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 406

This madness has to stop. On and on it goes... and nothing is ever going to change until we recognize that the most racist of any population are Natives. Day after day, month after month, year after year, generation after generation, they spew nothing but insults and negative comments against Whites, the very people who've been paying up billions of dollars given to Natives who never say "thank you" and who squander those monies away and never use it to improve their lives. Does anyone hear Whites crying "racism?" No, we don't... but we should be -- and it should be loud and clear! Natives need to admit and acknowledge a basic fact, that they're far more racist than any White man out there. Only then can we start to discuss, intelligently, what Natives need to do to stop living in the past and start looking to a future of self-sufficiency, and without endless flows of gazillions of dollars being poured into their pockets. There have been studies and more studies, commissions and more commissions, which have all wound up pointing fingers at Whites because that's how such inquiries are structured -- to look at ways to blame Whites -- and the Anti-Racism Directorate is going to get nowhere unless and until they change their mandate. Telling Natives to stop heaping guilt and, instead, to get off their butts and do something -- anything -- to improve their lives is not racism... it's plain old common sense.

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Nasdaq	5398.92	+18.24 (+0.34%)
Gold	1188.20	+9.80 (+0.83%)
Oil	47.11	+1.05 (+2.28%)

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**Khan** posted at 2:15 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 369

@tiger so what attitude would be acceptable? Let the lies stay silent and the status quo reign? All we hear from you is that anybody who disagrees with your black and white/right or wrong rhetoric is racist. There are no solutions presented and reality is absent in your comments. So, come back with some solutions that don't involve bankrupting the country and let's talk.

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**Tiger** posted at 5:34 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 18

I think you misunderstood me.

I was pointing out how the person complained about systemic racism and then in the same sentence more or less asked for more of it.

The only solution is to stop any special treatment based purely on race. Race should not be a different set of rules because it is the definition of racism itself and that's exactly what's happening.

its making things much worse.

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**studpuppy** posted at 12:58 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 18

I can't saw anything because I have been robbed, threatened, read about the monthly murders, weekly robberies, and watched shop lifters walk away all done by Natives, unfortunately, we have all become victims, and it puzzles why the word racism is used so leniently

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**Bikeybikebike** posted at 12:08 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 27

I'd argue that the problem lies in attitudes like yours.

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**Tiger** posted at 12:31 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 18

and you'd lose

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**Puh-Leeze** posted at 5:00 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 406

I see my comment was removed... there is something so very wrong with a newspaper which sensors comment and attempts to stifle free expression.

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**Tiger** posted at 5:23 pm on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 18

so was mine apparently

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**Khan** posted at 10:33 am on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 369

Wow. More of the same cliches and rhetoric from the Professional victims. We want chang but when change is brought it's racist. This is a no win scenario. What I would love to see is NAN and all the other umbrella groups draft a plan of action to end racism with concrete ideas the don't involve state mandated social engineering and billions of unaccountable dollars.

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Truth66 posted at 9:53 am on Sun, Nov 27, 2016.

Posts: 9

When I read that Councilor Rebecca Johnson is a member of the city's anti-racism and respect advisory committee, my first reaction was "what a joke".

Let's not forget that she was one of the stronger voices in favour of the city closing Grandview Lodge and Dawson Court. This act had no respect what so ever for the 300 mostly elderly residents in these facilities. These residents helped build this community and in some cases helped defend our way of life.

In addition, when these two facilities eventually closed, approximately 300 women lost their municipal jobs with the city which was likely the largest act of discrimination that this city has ever seen.

A short while ago I saw that someone had put a sticker in a public washroom. This sticker read: "City of Thunder Bay, Racism By Nature". Nothing can be further from the truth.

Racism, Sexism, Discrimination, etc. is rampant in this community and lead by the City of Thunder Bay itself.

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