



The Ottawa Area Summit on Racism
Inclusion depends on all of us

Overcoming Racism Achievements 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005

Business

The businesses of West Michigan will be places where mutual respect, understanding, and trust work together to create an atmosphere where diversity is valued, positions of power are shared, justice is equal, and economic opportunities are open to all.

- **Study and implement successful practices in recruitment, retention, and advancement of a diverse workforce.** The Business Tool Kit: Strategies for Recruitment, Retention and Advancement of a Diverse Workforce was prepared, disseminated, updated, marketed, and later expanded to include women, older Americans, and persons with disabilities. The tool kit is now available on the LEDA website. 900 hard copies have been distributed to date.
- **Implement and expand the Institute for the Healing of Racism.** The Holland Area Chamber of Commerce and LEDA are providing Institutes for community members. Four have been held in 2004 and four more are scheduled in 2005.
- **Provide coordination assistance between minority groups and business/employers.** Team members looked specifically at how business works with minority employees. Areas of interest included how temporary employees are hired, ESL classes and other forms of support, bilingual work instructions, and incentive packages for education

Community

The communities of West Michigan will be places where all people are valued. Our communities will foster an environment of *shared* leadership, decision making and opportunities. All members will benefit socially and economically through community successes by collaborating to achieve this vision.

- **Promote community actions that result in diverse neighborhoods:** This team established the Lakeshore Fair Housing Center, hired an executive director, secured non-profit status and opened an office in an effort to eliminate impediments to fair housing. Over the years the team trained 20 fair housing testers, met with Ottawa County Commissioners to advocate for fair housing services, created a Fair Housing Advisory Council (now the Board of Directors). A major Steelcase Foundation challenge grant to support the start-up of a fair housing center was matched by local funders and educational programming is now being provided in the community.
- **Provide community forums to expose racism, its roots and current practices, and to engender community response:** Educational presentations have been made to the community at large, in both the south and north end of the county.
- **Provide the North Ottawa Community with forums, annual films series and community events designed to educate about racial diversity .** This team formed to encourage Tri-Cities residents to become involved in working toward racial justice. Film festivals, participation in community events, and public forums on racism have been held.

Education

The schools in West Michigan will be safe, hospitable centers of academic achievement. They will embrace a multicultural population, treat issues of racism openly and honestly, and offer curricula that share a common understanding of the contributions of all ethnic groups.

- **Study and implement best practices for hiring a diverse workforce and training staff in diversity issues:** Post-secondary and K-12 educators gathered to learn, network, and begin a dialogue on the issues of hiring and training a diverse workforce for educational institutions in West Michigan. "Breakfast Links: A Networking Opportunity," a series of breakfast meetings, was held at each of the local post-secondary institutions, to provide networking on issues of collaboration, recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce, and diversity training models.
- **Develop, structure, and implement a multicultural curriculum:** Directors of curriculum for area K-12 schools were provided with resources for developing an anti-bias curriculum and guidelines for multicultural education programming. A survey tool for self-assessment of current multicultural education practices was disseminated.
- **Develop and implement methodology for community involvement:** Meetings were held to identify ways to interface between the schools and the community. Seven program models were designed for implementation. Family literacy programs, community language programs, cultural forums, and parent workshops were just a few of the projects identified.

Faith Communities

West Michigan will be a place where Faith Communities will actively work together to respect cultural traditions, dismantle cultural preconceptions, and embrace cultural differences.

- **Implement and expand the Institute for the Healing of Racism.** Twenty participants attended the first 10-week Institute for Healing Racism in spring of 2001. Since then, 17 Institutes have been offered for community members at large, nonprofit groups, and faith communities. In addition, two facilitator trainings have been held with over 20 facilitators trained. A retreat was held for all facilitators to review and revise the curriculum. This team continues to promote and offer the Institutes. The team also plans to offer Allies Luncheons and other multi-cultural gatherings.
- **Develop multicultural opportunities and foster multicultural relationships:** Local clergy and lay people met monthly to discuss topics of relevance, share ideas, and develop relationships in a multicultural environment.
- **Educate congregations on cultural diversity.** A community wide Sankofa service was held September 16, 2001 attended by approximately 500 people. This two-hour service was in recognition of the 500th anniversary of the introduction of slavery to the Americas, and invited repentance and reconciliation.
- **Develop opportunities that foster multicultural relationships.** The "Get Real Group" met monthly for the participants' own growth and relationships---in hopes of developing a model that could be "exported." The group read and discussed a book, learned from the authors' experiences, developed personal relationships, and shared openly about personal encounters with racism. The group represented five faith communities and three ethnic groups.
- **Promoted multi-faith diversity opportunities within faith communities in the area.** The group met to develop two lists: a). diversity events known to, or discovered by, group members; b). email addresses of churches in the area. Sixty church email addresses were collected and announcements of events were promoted by email to those churches.

Government

West Michigan local governmental units will design public policy that will ensure fair and equitable treatment in all facets of community life.

- **Develop and implement diversity training:** Meetings were held monthly to provide interested governmental employees with education on diversity issues. Each meeting offered a presentation on the “Diversity Topic of the Month.” Topics included migrant housing, impediments to fair housing, and interpretation services for Secretary of State offices.
- **Foster collaboration on diversity issues among all levels of government:** The Government Action Team invited all local governmental units to participate in this effort. Public policy forums were organized and attended by a broad-based coalition of governmental agencies. The Government Action Team members helped compile and disseminate a list of interpretation service providers that is now available at the Secretary of State’s office.

Health Care

West Michigan will be a place where all have equal access to basic health care, supplied by racially diverse providers.

- **Retention and recruitment of ethnic service providers (including employment of on-site translators / interpreters):** The Health Care Team developed a baseline of identified translators/interpreters currently utilized in the county with information about agencies, translator availability, and fees. This team also disseminated the compilation of identified translators/interpreters available to the health care system.
- **Develop meaningful and effective diversity training:** One model of diversity training was to make cultural awareness and sensitivity integral to new employee orientation. Workshops were also held, bringing in speakers to discuss an array of topics on diversity issues in the health care field. These workshops were designed to provide models and information on effective strategies for recruiting and retaining ethnically diverse service providers.
- **Develop and disseminate a diversity training kit:** The Health Care Team developed a kit to be disseminated to health care employers on diversity training models, best practices for retaining/recruiting a diverse workforce, and removing barriers for people of color.

Media

The West Michigan media will be fair and objective in reporting issues and events related to ethnic diversity and will present a balanced perspective in their reporting.

- **Develop a public awareness campaign to encourage fair, balanced media:** The Media Team developed a booklet of information on how to contact media outlets, types of coverage media offer, a sample press release, how to produce a local TV show, and tips on obtaining better coverage. Several hundred copies have been disseminated at the Summits and community events.
- **Engage media in dialogue about diversity issues and foster more inclusive coverage of local and regional news by facilitating partnerships between the wider community and the media.** A survey was designed and sent to media outlets in the area that included questions about the organization’s structure, the number of minority employees in news departments, recruitment, diversity training, policies on coverage, and inclusion of people of color in news and feature stories. A public meeting was held to create dialogue between the media and community residents, giving the public an opportunity to tell media representatives what they would like in local coverage and offering people from the media a forum to provide information to residents.