

  
**COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 2019**



## RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION VOICES OF OUR COMMUNITIES



Calgary communities in solidarity while protesting human rights violations in Sudan – Jun 2019

Action Dignity is a community-based organization that facilitates the collective voice of Calgary’s ethno-cultural communities towards full civic participation and integration through collaborative action.

We have been working with communities to advocate for policy and systems change since 2010 and with the feedback collected from our community conversations, we will be sharing a part of this ongoing work in this print-out and engaging the communities in discussions in today’s celebration of International Human Rights Day.

Having heard the voices of our ethnocultural communities on their experiences with inequity in the healthcare systems through our Healthcare 101 research in 2017/2018, LEAD for Change (funded by Family & Community Support Services) and We All Belong (funded by United Way of Calgary & Area) programs focused on engaging the communities in conversations about their awareness of human rights.

We engaged nine equity brokers (community connectors who advocate on behalf of another individual or group) who have established and trusted links with Calgary’s ethnocultural communities, to facilitate the community conversations. A total of 75 community members and youth participated in the conversations. The participants were given a printout of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights infographics and the discussions were centered around it.

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Afghanistan Community    | Fauzia Khedri            |
| Chinese Community        | Tracy Sun                |
| Jamaican Community       | Kim Chambers             |
| Latin American Community | Patricia Bernal          |
| Pakistan Community       | Hina Iqbal               |
| South Asian Community    | Sandeep Malhi            |
| South Sudanese Community | Ida Oliver & Mario Ayudo |
| Sudanese Community       | Hala El Madani           |

*“Educate people about human rights. I did not even know my rights until high school. It should be part of our curriculum starting from a young age. If people know about their rights, they will act on it. If people know they have rights, they will be able to use them.”*

- Community Conversation youth participant from South Asian community

## VOICES OF OUR COMMUNITIES

Now that you have reviewed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights articles, what does Human Rights mean to you?

### Individual Level

- Human rights are rights that we have when we were born, independent of the nationality or place we were born
- Right to self-respect
- Everyone is equal therefore there should be no social pyramid
- It's for everyone regardless of background
- Human rights basically give us the rights to be yourself without anyone stopping you
- Treat others how you want to be treated
- Rights of privacy
- Awareness about culture and religion
- Human rights don't have to start from the government, can start from my home, any level

### Societal Level

- Human rights are a reflection of your surroundings, meaning that if you are surrounded by people who infringe your rights, you would want others to uphold them
- The rights that society has agreed that every person is entitled to
- No one has the right to torture you (not being told, "go back")
- Right that a person must have to live in acceptable quality conditions, like right to work, right to have freedom, right to choose the governments they want to have, etc. , without distinction of sex, colors, culture or background
- To be able to take action freely without affecting others
- These rights should be respected throughout society; the liberty and freedom of your own actions should not violate the rights of another individual
- These rights and freedom should not be given to members of society but guaranteed for them

### Universal Level

- Human rights are moral principles or norms inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status
- The right of having freedom to express themselves without offending others
- The right to be free and equal and no one should try and change that
- Everyone has the right to live
- No one has the right to wrongfully imprison you nor can your country force you to leave. We have seen a lot of violations which split families up and it's wrong
- Freedom for everybody to obey their religion
- Everyone is equal, doesn't matter status or accomplishments, everyone is entitled to their rights
- The right to be respected and valued, independent of one's origin
- Zero tolerance of racism
- Zero discrimination

***"Although your rights may not be visible, they follow you everywhere you go. They are with you at all times, you just have to know what they are."***

*– Community Conversation participant from South Asian community*

RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION

**Where or who do you go to when you need help/support?**

Family , Friend(s) &/or Community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <i>Mother, father, aunty and friends</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Husband, relatives, sister in law</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Talk to people I trust</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Friends and family (mother)- Mother has lived experiences, she attended catholic school and was bullied a lot in her childhood</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Always need family help</i></li> <li>✓ <i>For emotional support, I would talk to family and friends. I will contact my closest friends to ask for help or guidance where to go, depending the support I needs.</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Get more information in the community, attend related events to learn how to react in these circumstances.</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Go to community for asking question about social life</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ <i>Will not tell parents as not comfortable talking with mother, thinks she won't fully understand (generation gap?)</i></li> <li>✗ <i>Not talk much- if have to, mostly my friends, rarely older brother</i></li> </ul>
Service Providers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <i>Ministry of Labour or Human Resources.</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Police, Women shelter</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Peace Officer - If the event happens in the LRT</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Immigrant Services, the court or the Police</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Some teachers who are openminded</i></li> <li>✓ <i>The labour board</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Outreach worker</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ <i>No one has ever been to social support groups</i></li> </ul>
Online Platforms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <i>Don't know. I will google it.</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Research in internet</i></li> <li>✓ <i>Research in internet for more information</i></li> </ul>	
Religion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <i>Divine Power</i></li> </ul>	

***“We have friends who we talk to when we need help, as we know they have similar experiences as we and can provide us insight on our current situation.”***

*– Community Conversation participant from Chinese community*

RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION

*“The shift schedule in my workplace was mixed up and the manager thought I was supposed to come in earlier and I was screamed at in front of everyone in the shop and the schedule was taped to my apron to publicly shame me.”*

*“ A Senior LP (health and safety person) at the warehouse, has issue with hijab. He sent me home due to my dressing (long shirt). I was told to wear fitting clothes for safety reasons. But the way of expressing and saying was bad. I was then forced to follow dress code even when not at work. At one time when I went to get Halloween treat bags in the warehouse, I was still asked to remove hijab although I was not at my work station. I am not allowed to wear anything loose even outside work hours. They should be respectful, even if cautioning due to safety reasons. It felt like the senior had problem with long clothes, not just work-related. His strange looks and way of saying...”*

*“...Police also discriminates - one time I was stopped and ticketed due to speeding in Chestermere. Then the police asked, “Do you have drugs?” (hijab = smuggling drugs?). Even with traditional clothes, I was looked down upon.”*

• *“...Still things are much better now than what was in the 70’s. No one used to travel with her in*

*“I used to live In the SW community, when was new here. Once someone stopped at road while driving and told me, “you should learn how to drive, go back to your home”. I was new here and did not know how to*

*“ A Grade 9 teacher picked on my Jamaican friend and emptied his bag in front of the class and shamed him...”*

*“I was followed from aisle to aisle in a grocery store by a spotter when I went there to buy milk.”*

*“Human Rights is applicable to all. Consider me as a human.”*

*– Community Conversation participant from Afghanistan community*

## RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION

**What is your understanding of a safe and healthy workplace?**

- *A place where there is no racism or harassment*
- *No favouritism*
- *Where Company policy is followed appropriately such as providing warnings before firing employees*
- *When you have a union sometimes it's okay...*
- *A place where both employees are treated equally and provided trainings that will have to be perfect so that there is no difficulty afterwards. Treatment everyone is responsible and everyone should have a sense of boundaries.*
- *Probably ongoing training and effective communication between employees and managers*
- *Right to refuse work that workers feel are unsafe*
- *Fair treatment of all employees and protection for employees, jobs, families and children.*
- *Make fair treatment in workplace as a legislation and unionize every company*
- *Respect should be everywhere and anywhere for whatever job you do; janitor or kitchen, whatever work you do, you should be respected*
- *When you can go to work feeling safe and supported, protected and also feeling guided*
- *Security of keeping your job even when you need to attend to family emergencies*
- *Honesty, support and helpfulness of the managers and bosses and being treated equally*
- *Proper and safe equipment in workplace*
- *Education for employees about the workplace, proper equipment*

**What do you need to help you address concerns about your workplace?**

- *Collaborate to develop and implement an outreach program – provide training for managers for example in healthcare workplaces where assistant managers are made aware of the fear experienced by workers in refusing work that is unsafe.*
- *Conduct a research on workplace racism and discrimination and submit the report to the relevant government offices.*
- *Develop a on-the-job training plan for all workers/employees*
- *Inform and educate workers/employees on ways to approach a third party to help resolve a workplace issue before risking termination.*
- *Services and resources to empower individuals in managing workplace conflicts*
- *Everyone should know the OHS Act and the new rules and changes (June 2018) in it. It is a must for all of us to know our rights and act upon them. Somehow, we need to find ways how to inform and teach immigrants about this as some may not even have heard about this Act.*

***“What qualifies as racism? Discrimination, favoritism, nepotism. Once we have all these in a workplace, then that place would be considered a racist place to me. Once these factors are present then it is not a healthy workplace because people feel unprotected and job security is not there anymore because at any time or any mistake leads to you getting out (fired?). Here there is also bullying.”***

– Community Conversation participant from South Sudanese community

## RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION

**What stops you from reporting an incident (of racism/discrimination)?**
**Fear**

- *English is my second language, fear not to be understood*
- *Complaining will make the situation worst. Retaliation*
- *I don't want to be victimized*
- *Fear of being isolated or pointed at*
- *In workplaces, people usually don't report discrimination incidents, because it may impact badly or make things worse. Like getting fired or reduced working hours/ shifts, leading to a resignation/leave the company.*
- *Fear of things getting worse*
- *If you complain, people think it is attention-seeking behaviour and then turns into an even bigger problem*
- *Shame, fear not to be heard, helped or not taken seriously*
- *Scare to Involved in troubles*
- *fear of job loss/expulsion*
- *The fear of being validated*
- *People don't speak as everyone is afraid*

**Unfamiliarity**

- *Probably the only thing will be, where to report it*
- *Did not know where to go*
- *Lack of awareness*
- *Don't know where to report it and if you should (if the police would consider it as reportable)*
- *Lack of awareness- not much human rights education at school*
- *not knowing where to go*

*"However, in case of discrimination I will call 311 and report it." - Community Conversation participant from Latin American community*

**Discouraged**

- *Waste of time reporting the incident and not getting any help*
- *Get involved into a bigger issue or any process, that will take time or be time consuming*
- *Teachers don't do much*
- *Mind my own business.*
- *No point of reporting as it is not going to stop, based on previous experience from other students at school who reported*
- *No power, even after reporting, there is no feedback.*
- *Just drop the situation*

But participants shared their Hope:

*"We can't judge people who criticize, it is just different compatibility. Sometimes they can be better than others and **can develop better understanding later on.**"*

- Community Conversation participant from South Asian community

**How do we want to organize ourselves to address challenges of racism & discrimination?**

- Community Suggestions/Inputs
- Awareness /Educational workshops
- Community Conversations
- Advocate for cultural Services & Resources
- Self-Check – bias, prejudices
- Organize Human Rights Workshops
- Awareness Creation Actions
- Advocate for Platforms to share experiences
- Mutual Ground Conversations
- Recognition & Acknowledgement of significant cultural days
- Stop/Call Out Actions that perpetuate and endorse racism and discrimination
- Promote Culture and Strengthen Self-Identity
- Support Multiculturalism

RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION

**What do you think will make Calgary a more welcoming and inclusive place, where our human rights are respected?**

*“It is important to keep Calgary as an inclusive city, as in this way we build a great reputation...”*  
 – Community conversation participant from Latin American community

**Community-led Actions**

- Create or organize a group of volunteers to help new immigrant to settled down in the city.
- Organize events for immigrants that have just landed. It would help them feel more welcome.
- Cultural Festivals
- Support cultural communities that organize events that bring together Calgarians from diverse groups together to celebrate the diversity in the City.

**Relevant Information and Resources**

- Calgary is already an inclusive and welcoming city. Institutions help and provide good information, support and good resources.

**Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

- Calgary should continue promoting diversity and inclusion though different annual events.
- Encourage companies to organize Human Rights training/education – this can keep Calgary a more welcoming place to live.
- Media representation, watching more positive news about colored people.
- Making accommodations for everyone whenever possible.
- Education system should try to understand its students better.
- Keep economy growing, diversity makes any place better, different way of thinking makes people stronger.

**Human Rights Education**

- Calgary as a whole is fine. Our youth should be taught about human rights and to respect everyone and their values.
- Educate people about human rights. I did not even know my rights until high school. It should be part of our curriculum starting from a young age. If people know about their rights, they will act on it. If people know they have rights, they will be able to use them.
- More group discussions about human rights.
- Free workshops for general knowledge on human rights and create more awareness. These should be advertised appropriately though roadside ad boards, monthly community magazines, Media
- Creating awareness through courses and at schools
- Human Rights education in schools to start at an early age

**Collective actions to build a Strong and Supportive City**

- Calgary is a friendly city. Even the homeless persons are respected
- One feel welcomed in Calgary
- People understanding their own rights and straight up telling people that you know your rights
- Calgary, with its low tax, acceptable transportation, easy to rent and good quality of life may attract people to move and live here. Also, Calgary is not hostile or against immigration, which may sound good to people who are thinking to come to the city.

**RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION**
**Why is it important to continue making Calgary a welcoming and inclusive place?**
**Maintain Calgary's image and reputation**

- It is important to maintain Calgary's image and reputation. Calgary has set the bar high, and should be a model and example to the rest of Canada. Other cities should follow Calgary's example.
- Calgary is an important city in constant expansion, where the level of respect, inclusivity/inclusion, acceptance, and consideration are high. Calgary is an example of harmonious, polite and friendly city. It is a city with good practices.
- People need to stop labelling it as a white country/city. Canada is a diverse place and people seem to think the diverse people don't belong. Making Calgary more welcoming will break white supremacy as well as false beliefs.
- For immigrants Calgary would be the best place to relocate if we make it a more welcoming city.
- We can grow as a more culturally diverse and advanced cosmopolitan society.
- It's important as making Calgary a more welcoming place will allow Calgary to develop its multicultural and diverse society.

**Positive Impact on Mental Health of Calgarians**

- It is important, because, if the person feels part of the community or the society, they will feel happy.
- It is important to live in a place that is safe, where people are polite to each other.
- Calgary will become a better place to live for everyone.
- So more people feel welcome and feel comfortable living here.
- People should feel accepted in a place they live, not the other way around.
- I want Calgary to be the best, I want us to move forward. I want my neighbors to invite me over and talk about their day. I don't want the color of my skin, or anyone's else to come in the way of making friends and helping others.

**Help Build the Next Generation of Leaders**

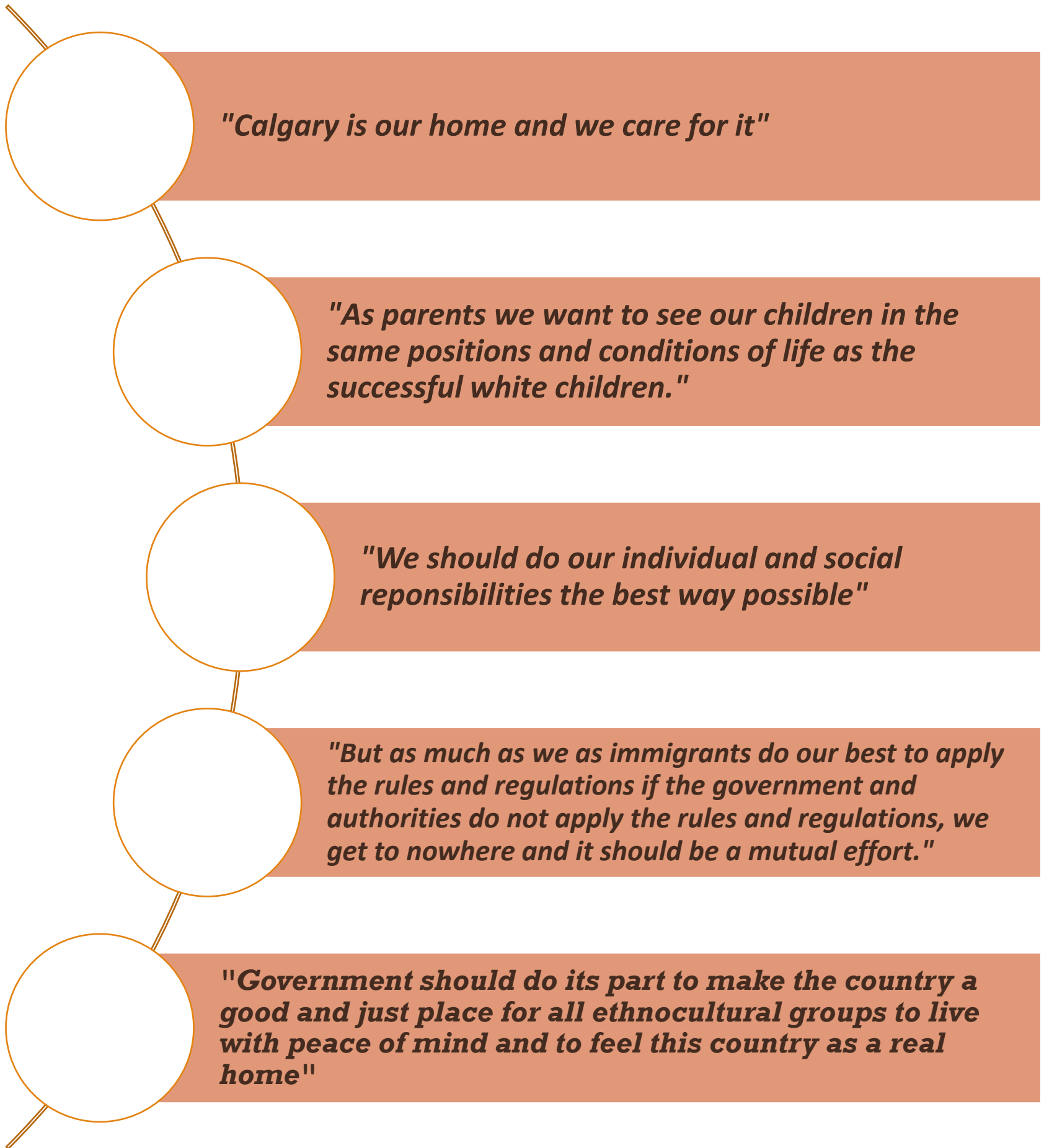
- It is important to keep the city as a welcoming and friendly place, where people are respected. It is important to pass these good practices to the new generations.
- Keeping Calgary as a welcoming city, make us a more cohesive society, unifies us, and allow us to grow as a city.
- We are raising our kids here, therefore making it a friendly city will provide them better environment to learn.

**Promotes Stronger Economic Growth**

- It is important to keep Calgary as an inclusive city, as in this way we build a great reputation, and more immigrants will decide to move here, and will help making Calgary's economy growth and stabilized.
- Keep Economy growing, diversity makes any place better, different way of thinking makes people stronger.
- It is important because more people can see how Calgary respects everybody even with their differences, and this will attract more families to work and live in the city.
- It is important that Calgary continue growing, and its activities and businesses too; this will create a secure environment to work uninterruptedly and also find a new job faster. Hence, Calgary economy will improve and increase Calgarians' quality of live. Furthermore, there will be more skilled, educated, and grateful people.
- Because Canada needs more immigration to keep its population and we need to make Calgary more friendly for those immigrants.
- We are one of the richest provinces in Canada, if we are welcoming and accepting, it will build stronger communities, our province will flourish with more people, better community and economy.



RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION



RIGHTS, CANADA, ACTION



## WHY WE EXIST

We exist because we all need each other. We all depend on each other and we are all valuable, important and worthy of the same treatment and the same opportunities.

We can only build the future, a future worthy of our children, by standing together and fostering a community of equality and dignity for all.

We are a country steeped in indigenous histories and fused together in a mosaic of cultures. We pride ourselves of living in a community who respects and values differences. Equality is a right, and as it is with many of our rights, we must fight for it. We must never take it for granted and always remind each other of its importance.

We exist to ensure all of us experience this right. That we never forget how our differences make us stronger and how our conviction of being a fair and just community is always upheld.

We all have a role to play. Each one of us is responsible for the quality of the community we live in. We all play a role in building our community and in building the future. We can all demonstrate our support and the value and respect we have for each other, with every interaction and at every moment. It's our choice what kind of future we build. Our actions define us.

ActionDignity embraces and promotes the following values:

- Respect for diversity
- Equity and social justice
- Active citizenship and democratic participation
- Collaboration

Dec 10, 2019 international Human Rights Day event is a collaboration of ActionDignity programs, Indigenous communities, ethnocultural communities, Calgary Arts Development & Trico Changemakers Studio – Artists as Changemakers Project, Basic Income Calgary, and all ActionDignity's stakeholders.

Funded by:

