



CONFRONTING XENOPHOBIA THROUGH COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

A Toolkit for Community Organizers

Last updated April 2026

Introduction

This toolkit brings together the ideas, reflections, and proposed solutions generated during our recent workshop on xenophobia, held in partnership with Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) facilitators from across the country during the 2026 Metropolis Conference held in Halifax, which is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

This resource builds on the work of the [CONFRONTING XENOPHOBIA THROUGH COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS: A Workshop Resource Guide](#) which was developed after the first iteration of this workshop which was presented during the 2025 Pathways to Prosperity Conference in Halifax.

While the workshop and the original resource captures a wide range of community-informed perspectives on addressing xenophobia at personal, systemic, institutional, and local levels, this toolkit seeks to further that work by providing community organizers with a tangible tool they can use to action anti-racism campaigns.

It is important to emphasize that what follows is not the one and only way to organize and action anti-racism campaigns. Rather, it represents a snapshot of an evolving collection of insights shaped by the experiences and knowledge participants brought into the room. It is because of the generosity of participants that this resources is available. Our deepest gratitude goes to the many community organizers that joined us in Halifax and shared their experiences with us.

It is our sincere hope that this tool supports the great work already being done across Turtle Island in response to rising cases of xenophobia.

A special thank you to our colleagues and friends, Natasha Martinez (Hamilton Local Immigration Partnership Council) and Mounir Nasri (National LIP Secretariat), for their contributions to the first workshop and resource guide that set the foundation for this toolkit.

In solidarity,

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Land Acknowledgement

The 2026 Metropolis Conference took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia which is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet), and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726.

The treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources but in fact, recognized Mi'kmaq and Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

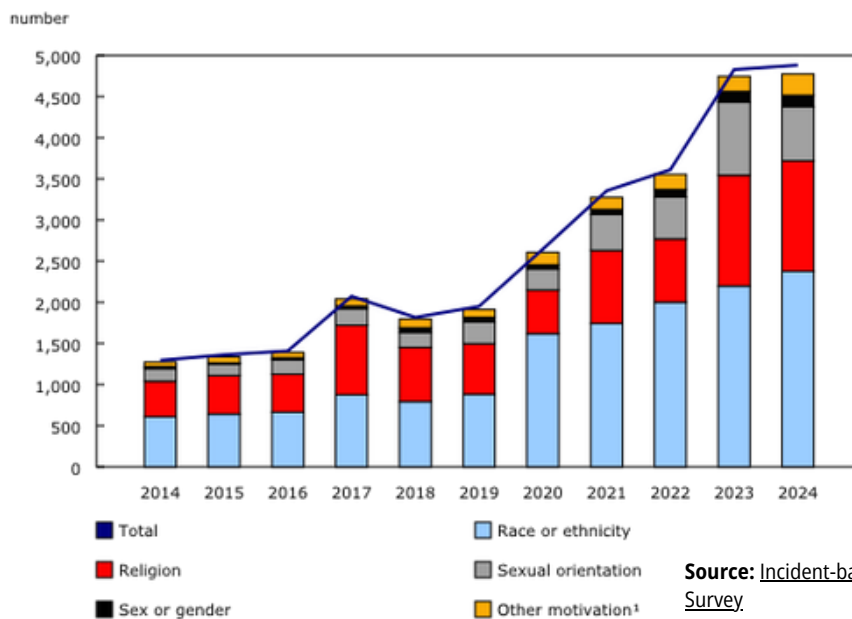
As attendees that participated in the conference in Halifax, we acknowledge the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed in this Territory and recognizes that we are all Treaty People.

Addressing Xenophobia Through Relationship-Based, Community-Driven Campaigns

Background and Context

Xenophobia in Canada continues to be fueled by misunderstanding, misinformation, and emotionally charged narratives that portray newcomers as threats or competitors. The rapid rise of online misinformation, particularly on social media platforms, has amplified fear-based messaging that is often consumed without critical examination. These narratives are further reinforced by economic insecurity and political rhetoric that frames newcomers as the cause of social or financial strain.

From 2014-2024 police-reported hate crimes showed a sharp increase in race or ethnicity and religion driven hate crime motivations. While no data for 2025 has been released yet, the trend is likely to continue to go up.



Traditional responses to xenophobia have focused heavily on fact-based education and awareness campaigns. While important, these approaches are often insufficient on their own. Xenophobia is primarily an emotional reaction; therefore, facts alone rarely change attitudes. Fear, resentment, and perceived loss of belonging must be addressed through human connection, empathy, and trust-building.

Problem Statement

Through a facilitated conversation during the workshop, participants shared why Xenophobia persists based on their work with community. 5 key themes emerged:

1

Misinformation spreads faster than accurate information, especially online.

Campaigns often speak about newcomers rather than with them.

2

3

Many individuals consume media in language-specific or ideologically closed environments, making it difficult to unlearn false narratives.

Public messaging frequently relies on passive tools (posters, billboards) that do not engage people emotionally.

4

5

There is limited funding and capacity, particularly in rural and smaller communities, to implement sustained anti-xenophobia initiatives.

Additionally, participants pointed to the fact that xenophobia and racism can exist within newcomer communities themselves, further complicating integration and belonging efforts. This underscores the need for inclusive, nuanced approaches that do not frame communities as monolithic.

Guiding Principles

This initiative is grounded on the following principles, which must be inbedded from the onset of any anti-racism initiative or campaign.

Relationship Before Persuasion

- Building trust and mutual understanding is a prerequisite for changing attitudes.

Emotion-Centered Approaches

- Since xenophobia is emotionally driven, responses must also engage emotions through storytelling, lived experience, and human connection.

Reciprocity & Inclusion

- Communities are partners, not targets. Campaigns must be co-created with newcomers, employers, youth, and community members.

Early & Everyday Intervention

- Attitudes form early. Schools, workplaces, and community spaces are key sites for meaningful engagement.

Proposed Approach

The initiative seeks to implement a multi-pronged, scalable campaign designed to humanize newcomers, disrupt misinformation, and foster shared belonging through the following methods:

Storytelling and Humanization

- Share newcomer and refugee stories online and in person.
- Highlight everyday experiences that reflect “typical Canadian life” to challenge stereotypes.
- Use emotionally resonant narratives rather than statistics alone.

Unexpected Engagement Spaces

- Integrate messaging into spaces where people are not expecting to be “educated,” such as:
 - Sports events (e.g., hockey games)
 - Community festivals
 - Workplaces
- Normalize inclusion rather than framing it as a corrective exercise.

Schools & Early Learning

- Support anti-racism and inclusion workshops in elementary schools.
- Age-appropriate, curiosity-driven learning that humanizes difference.
- Children are open, honest, and less conditioned by social bias—making early intervention highly effective.

Employers as Allies

- Engage employers as partners in combating xenophobia.
- Develop workplace learning campaigns focused on inclusion, belonging, and shared success.
- Explore employer-supported or co-funded initiatives.

Language & Messaging Strategy

- Use accessible, inclusive language.
- Avoid deficit-based or apologetic framing of newcomers.
- Be intentional with naming, framing, and tone to prevent reinforcing bias.

Implementation, Outcomes & Funding

Implementation Strategy:

Given funding and capacity constraints, the initiative should:

- Pilot a small-scale project first.
- Leverage existing networks and structures (e.g., Local Immigration Partnerships).
- Partner with organizations already doing anti-hate and anti-racism work.
- Build incrementally, refining and expanding over time.

This phased approach allows for learning, adaptation, and sustainability.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased empathy and understanding between newcomers and host communities.
- Greater public awareness of how misinformation fuels xenophobia.
- Stronger cross-sector partnerships (community, schools, employers).
- Improved sense of belonging for newcomers and racialized communities.
- A replicable model that can be adapted for rural and urban contexts.

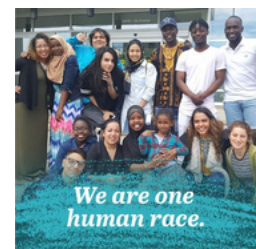
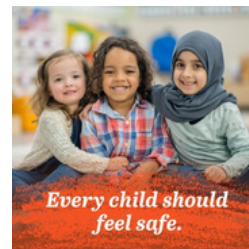
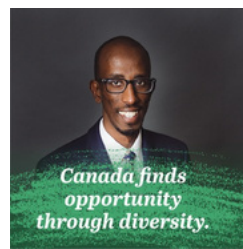
Alignment & Funding Potential:

This initiative aligns with:

- Anti-racism and social cohesion mandates.
- Community integration and belonging objectives.
- Existing provincial and national funding priorities (e.g., anti-hate, inclusion, community resilience).

Potential funding and partnership opportunities include foundations, employers, and national anti-racism funding streams

Sample Campaigns



CCR Campaigns

Uses **positive, values-based messaging** to build public support for refugees and newcomers.

Website: ccrweb.ca/en



London Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership: I Am London

I Am London campaign shares **success stories of immigrants** in the region, highlighting their contributions and helping shift local narratives.

Website: iamlondonon.com



Lanark & Renfrew Local Immigration Partnership 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

Strategic plan with a clear priority on building trust and promoting positive attitudes toward immigrants, cultural diversity, and newcomers.

Website: liplanarkrenfrew.ca

Welcoming Communities Coalition



A local immigration partnership that conducts **community-based research, engagement, and education** to raise awareness of newcomer issues and foster inclusive, welcoming communities, in partnership with the Immigrant Welcome Centre.

Website: immigrantwelcome.ca/community-leadership/



Anti-Racism Framework

Anti-racism framework to support coordinated, community-level campaigns that counter hate, racism, and discrimination targeting racialized groups and newcomers.

Website: canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/combating-hate/action-plan.html

Conclusion

To effectively address xenophobia, communities must move beyond facts alone and invest in emotional connection, relationship-building, and human-centered storytelling. By meeting people where they are, emotionally, culturally, and physically, this resource seeks to create lasting change that strengthens social cohesion and reinforces the message that we all belong.

Review the template in the appendix of this resource for further support in starting your next anti-racism campaign.

Appendix A: Practical Guide for Planning Community-Driven Campaigns

This toolkit is designed to help organizations plan, design, and deliver campaigns that address xenophobia and racism through belonging, relationship-building, and storytelling, but it can be adapted to any campaign that you wish to organize.

You can use it to:

- Plan a single campaign
- Guide a pilot project
- Align partners around a shared approach
- Support funding proposals
- Train staff or volunteers

Check out the example campaign design below and use the headings to support your ideation when designing your next campaign.

PART 1: Campaign Strategy (The “Why”)

Identify the purpose of your campaign. Why are you doing this? What is the issue you’re trying to tackle? Where is your core belief in starting this campaign?

Example Anti-racism Campaign:

Purpose

To reduce xenophobia by building belonging, disrupting misinformation, and strengthening relationships through emotionally resonant, community-driven campaigns.

The Problem We’re Addressing

- Xenophobia is fueled by fear, misinformation, and emotional narratives
- Facts alone do not change attitudes
- Many campaigns speak about communities instead of with them
- Passive awareness tools (posters, billboards) rarely engage people meaningfully

Our Core Belief

People change through connection, not correction.

PART 2: Guiding Principles (The “How”)

What are guiding principles of your campaign? Identifying the “how” will help your organization and team stay within the objectives of your purpose. It will set the tone for the engagement, approach, and method for implementation.

Appendix A: Practical Guide for Planning Community-Driven Campaigns

Example Anti-racism Campaign:

In this resource our guiding principle when engaging in anti-racism work are:

- Relationship before persuasion
- Emotion-centered approaches
- Reciprocity & co-creation
- Early & every day intervention
- Belonging over blame

The above is not an exhaustive list of guiding principles. It merely suggests a set of values that will drive the campaign. Organizations may choose to borrow these in their campaign design, but we encourage you to consider other guiding principles that are informed based on the context of your community.

PART 3: Campaign Strategy Pillars (The “What”)

While the following strategy pillars are not exhaustive, they capture the voices and insights shared by participants in the workshop that helped shape this resource.

Organizations may expand, combine or decrease these strategy pillars based on the approach and outcomes they seek to obtain. Nevertheless, we suggest that every campaign incorporate least 3–4 of the pillars below:

Pillar 1: Lead With Belonging

- Create spaces where people feel seen, valued, and reflected
- Showcase culture, food, stories, and identity
- Empower youth and community members as leaders

Ask:

How does this campaign help people feel they belong?

Pillar 2: Humanize, Don’t Lecture

- Use personal stories over statistics
- Highlight everyday, relatable experiences of newcomers
- Focus on shared values and common ground

Ask:

Does this feel human, relatable, and emotionally engaging?

Appendix A: Practical Guide for Planning Community-Driven Campaigns

Pillar 3: Meet People Where They Are

- Deliver messages in everyday spaces:
 - Sports events
 - Schools
 - Workplaces
 - Community festivals
 - Social media
- Avoid framing activities as “training” whenever possible

Ask:

Where will people encounter this when they’re not expecting to be persuaded?

Pillar 4: Disrupt Misinformation With Context

- Acknowledge misinformation without amplifying it
- Provide context instead of confrontation
- Use clear, accessible language
- Compete emotionally and visually online

Ask:

Are we adding understanding—not just correcting facts?

Pillar 5: Embrace Complexity

- Recognize:
 - Microaggressions
 - Denialism
 - Youth, peer, and parent conflict
 - Indigenous-newcomer tensions
 - Racism within communities
- Use trauma-informed approaches
- Practice “calling in” rather than “calling out”

Ask:

Are we leaving space for complexity and learning?

Pillar 6: Start Small, Build Over Time

- Pilot one campaign
- Learn and adapt
- Scale using existing networks and partnerships

Ask:

What is realistic with our current capacity?

Appendix A: Practical Guide for Planning Community-Driven Campaigns

PART 4: Campaign Planning Template

Campaign Title: _____.
(Clear, inclusive, non-confrontational)

1. Campaign Goal

What is the one main outcome?

- Build belonging
- Increase empathy
- Reduce misinformation
- Strengthen relationships
- Shift narratives

Goal statement:

This campaign aims to _____.

2. Target Audience

- Youth / young adults
- General public
- Employers
- Students
- Families
- Community members

Primary audience: _____.

Secondary audience (if any): _____.

3. Key Message

Keep it simple, human, and values-based.

Core message: _____.

We avoid:

- Blame
- Shaming
- Deficit-based language
- Technical jargon

Appendix A: Practical Guide for Planning Community-Driven Campaigns

PART 4: Campaign Planning Template (Continued)

4. Emotional Focus

What do we want people to feel?

- Belonging
- Curiosity
- Empathy
- Pride
- Shared purpose

Primary emotion: _____

5. Campaign Activities (Check all that apply)

- Storytelling (online or in person)
- Youth leadership engagement
- School-based activity
- Workplace campaign
- Sports or community event integration
- Social media content

Brief description:

6. Engagement Space

Where will people encounter this?

- School
- Workplace
- Sports venue
- Community event
- Social media
- Other: _____

Appendix A: Practical Guide for Planning Community-Driven Campaigns

PART 4: Campaign Planning Template (Continued)

7. Partners & Co-Creators

Who is involved beyond us?

- Newcomer voices
- Youth leaders
- Employers
- Schools
- Community organizations

Partner roles:

8. Language & Tone Check

Before launch, confirm:

- Inclusive and accessible language
- No “us vs. them” framing
- Respectful, non-apologetic tone
- Clear and positive messaging

9. Measuring Success

How will we know it worked?

- Attendance / participation
- Engagement (views, shares, comments)
- Feedback or reflections
- Partner interest in repeating
- Requests for expansion

Brainstorm indicators:

Appendix A: Practical Guide for Planning Community-Driven Campaigns

PART 4: Campaign Planning Template (Continued)

10. Scaling & Adaptation

If successful, how could this grow?

- Repeat in another setting
- Adapt for youth / employers / schools
- Expand digitally
- Build into long-term programming

Reflect on what worked & what didn't work. Make a list to capture your post-campaign insights:



PART 5: Campaign Quality Check

Before launching, ask:

- Does this campaign build belonging?
- Does it humanize rather than lecture?
- Does it invite curiosity, not confrontation?
- Was it co-created with community voices?

If yes to all, then proceed.

PART 6: What Success Looks Like

- Increased empathy and understanding
- Stronger relationships across communities
- Reduced normalization of racist language
- Greater sense of belonging for newcomers and racialized communities
- A campaign model that can be reused and adapted