

Part IV – Lessons Learned

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Over the past nine months, the *Municipal Leader* has examined the issue of diversity in municipal politics. This series has looked at three different groups of people that are in all Manitoba communities: women, youth and visible minorities. While each group presents unique challenges, there are some general lessons that have been learned.

Lesson #1 Get local people interested

Perhaps the number one way to improve your Council is to get local people interested. It doesn't matter who they are, just get them interested in the process. One of the challenges many communities face is getting enough people to run for Council and getting people interested in the process. Targeting groups like women, youth and visible minorities might be one way to address this problem. The more people interested in the process the better, and increasing the diversity of your Council will only strengthen it.

Lesson #2 Let people know what you are doing

Closely related to getting people interested is letting them know what Council does. One of the obstacles identified in this series is that many groups do not understand the process, which poses a barrier to becoming involved. If you want to get more people involved, make

sure people know what Council does and that they understand the process. Invite the public to attend meetings, advertise when meetings are, and let them know what Council can, and cannot, do. If you want people to get involved they have to understand what they are getting involved in and why they should get involved.

Lesson #3 Maximize your resources

People are a resource – use them. Every community has people, and has people who are not engaged in the process. One of the greatest benefits of getting more people involved in the process is that you get different points of view and different insights into issues facing the community. You also are likely to get more people willing to volunteer for community projects – and when was the last time your Council complained about having too many volunteers? New people bring new ideas and insights which can only better your decision making process. Everyone has something to offer, so listen to what these people have to say.

Lesson #4 You don't have to do it alone

If you are interested in finding ways of making your Council more diverse but find the whole process daunting, don't worry. You don't have to do it alone – help is out there. Look at the resources that



have been highlighted in this series (see Resource Review at right). These are designed to help you out. Contact the groups that provide the resources, as they want to help. There are lots of people willing to assist you. All you need to do is make contact with them.

Lesson # 5 Look at innovative approaches

This series has highlighted a number of innovative approaches that other communities have taken. Pattern yourselves after them or come up with something completely unique. Maybe you can add a youth member of Council, or maybe you can reach out to the local women's group. Look at setting up a program like a future leaders group or a youth cabinet. Develop a community award for youth involvement or an award for women of distinction. Not only will this allow you to highlight some of the positive people in the community, but it will also encourage more people to become involved.

By reaching out to these groups and increasing the diversity in your Council, you are sure to better meet the needs of your community. So take another look around your Council table. Does your Council represent the community it is elected to serve? Perhaps your Council already is a fair reflection of the community. Or maybe having other groups represented and having diverse perspectives on important local issues would strengthen your Council. With the next municipal election just around the corner there is an excellent opportunity to take a look at this issue. Should you be trying to attract new candidates to run for Council? This is a decision that rests with your Council, but as the order of government closest to the people it is crucial that all members of the community are included. ♡

Resource Review

These resources are compiled from our three previous 'Diversity in Municipal Politics' articles.

Part I - Women in Politics

View complete article online at <http://www.amm.mb.ca/PDF/Magazine/June2005/Women-in-politics.pdf> - zoom=100

Resources:

An overview of the 'See Jane Run' Conference
<http://www.onewomanonevote.org/documents/SeeJaneRunWebsite.doc>
 Status of Women Canada <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/>
 Women's Enterprise Centre <http://www.wecm.ca/index.html>
 Manitoba Women's Directorate <http://www.gov.mb.ca/wd/>
 Manitoba Women's Advisory Council <http://www.mwac.mb.ca>

Part II - Youth Inclusion

View complete article online at <http://www.amm.mb.ca/PDF/Magazine/Fall2005/diversity.pdf>

Resources:

Toronto Youth Cabinet: http://www.torontoyouth.com/youth_cabinet/init/index.php
 Future Leaders Group (RREDA): <http://www.rreda.com> (click on Initiatives)
 Manitoba Municipal Act (Section 81): <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/m225e.php>
 Growing Up In Cities: <http://www.growingupincities.ca>

Part III - Visible Minorities in Politics

View complete article online at <http://www.amm.mb.ca/PDF/Magazine/Winter2006/DiversityPartIII.pdf>

Resources:

Black, Jerome. 2001. Immigrants and Ethnoracial Minorities in Canada: A Review of Their Participation in Federal Politics. *Electoral Insight*. 3(1):8-13.
 Carr, Jim. 2005. Manitoba's precious asset. Canada West Foundation. *Dialogues Magazine*. Summer.
 The Daily. 2005. Study: Canada's visible minority population in 2017. Statistics Canada. Tuesday, March 22, 2005. Accessed online at: <http://www.statecan.ca/Daily/English/050322/d050322b.htm> November 10, 2005.
 Tremblay, Manon. 2001. The Right to Vote: The Heart of Democracy. *Electoral Insight*. 3(1):2-3.

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