

Bemidji Area Study on Race Relations

*An exploration of current race
relations between American Indian
and White residents*

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 0 9



Bemidji Area Study on Race Relations

An exploration of current race relations between American Indian and White residents

February 2009

Prepared by:

Ela Rausch, Greg Owen, and Nicole MartinRogers

Wilder Research
451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700
www.wilderresearch.org

Contents

Summary of key findings.....	1
Background.....	2
Methods and participant characteristics.....	3
Overall perceptions of community race relations in Bemidji.....	8
Community leadership’s response to race issues in Bemidji.....	12
Perceptions of equal opportunity and experiences.....	14
Housing.....	16
Employment.....	18
Education.....	20
Health care and government services.....	22
Public safety and law enforcement.....	23
Community and social activities.....	24
Treaty rights.....	28
Building bridges and addressing racial discrimination.....	29
Participants’ suggestions for next steps.....	31
Discussion.....	34
Next steps.....	35
Appendix.....	37
Focus group questions.....	39
Survey instrument.....	40

Figures

1. Residence area of focus group participant	4
2. Respondent characteristics	5
3. Respondents' rating of race relations in the community	8
4. Respondents' perception of change in Bemidji area race relations over the past five years	9
5. Respondents' views on whether the Bemidji area is welcoming to people of all races	10
6. Respondents' views on whether diversity is one of the Bemidji area's strengths	10
7. Respondents' views on whether race relations are a top priority when compared with other important issues	11
8. Respondents' level of satisfaction with how well different groups in society get along with each other	11
9. Residents' views on whether community leaders work well together to address diversity issues	12
10. Respondents' views on whether they feel listened to by local government decision makers.....	12
11. Whether respondents have been asked to serve in a leadership position in their community	13
12. Respondents' views on whether they usually participate in situations where they are the minority	13
13. Respondents' level of satisfaction with their ability to influence local decision makers.....	14
14. Respondents' views on whether generations of discrimination make it harder for minority groups to achieve their goals.....	14
15. Respondents' views on whether they have advantages in life because of their race.....	15
16. Respondents' views on whether people of other races have advantages in life because of their race.....	15
17. Highest frequency of discrimination reported by respondents	16
18. Respondents' views on whether homelessness affects people of all races equally in their community	16
19. Respondents' views on whether discrimination in the housing market is a problem in the community	17
20. Respondents' views on whether people of all races have an equal opportunity to apply for and get jobs in the community	18

Figures (continued)

21. Respondents' views on whether applying for jobs online is easy	18
22. Respondents' views on whether people who are poor or unemployed are in that situation because they lack effort.....	19
23. Respondents' views on whether people of all races have an equal opportunity to receive a quality education in the community	20
24. Respondents' views on whether people of all races are treated fairly by education faculty and staff in their community	21
25. Respondents' views on whether people of all races in the community are stopped equally by law enforcement.....	23
26. Whether or not respondents have volunteered in their community during the past year.....	24
27. Proportion of respondents who are either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their.....	25
28. Proportion of American Indian respondents who have experienced discrimination due to race in the past year either several times or on a very regular basis by area.....	27
29. Respondents' views on whether we should uphold hunting, fishing, and gathering rights guaranteed to American Indians by treaties.....	28
30. Respondents' views on whether they would like to better get to know people from other cultural and racial groups.....	29
31. Respondents' views on whether they would like to know more about local American Indian culture and history.....	29
32. Respondents' views on how race relations in the Bemidji area will change over the next 5 years	30
33. Priority areas for addressing racial discrimination and race relations in the community	31

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the members of the Shared Vision committee and the staff of Headwaters Regional Development Commission for their help in designing this study.

In addition, we would like to thank Marketing Assistance & Research Solutions (MARS) at Bemidji State University for their work in collecting data; Lorna Lague and Shooting Star Casino, White Earth Band of Ojibwe; Alice Benaise and Red Lake Project Safe Neighborhoods, Red Lake Nation; and Tara Brown, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe for their assistance with focus groups.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the Bemidji area community members who participated in a focus group and/or completed a survey for this study. Without them, this report would not be possible.

The following Wilder Research staff members contributed to the completion of this study:

Jacqueline Campeau
Rena Cleveland
Marilyn Conrad
Phil Cooper
Paul Devereaux
Louann Graham

Summary of key findings

Below is a summary of the key findings from this study:

- The majority of respondents rate current race relations in the Bemidji area as “fair” and expect that things will stay the same over the next five years. American Indian participants are much more likely than White participants to view relations as “poor.”
- About half of respondents feel that community leaders in Bemidji work well together in addressing diversity issues; American Indians are less likely than Whites to feel this way.
- Both American Indian and White respondents are more likely to acknowledge the racial advantages of persons outside their own racial group than to acknowledge any advantages they may have experienced because of their own race.
- Nearly all American Indian respondents say they have experienced racial discrimination in the past year in at least one area of community life, compared to one-third of White respondents.
- American Indian respondents who do not live on a reservation are less likely than those who do live on a reservation to feel discriminated against and more likely to agree that there are equal opportunities for people of all races in their community.
- Both American Indian and White respondents report overall high levels of satisfaction with their present housing and employment.
- The majority of both White and American Indian respondents say they have volunteered in the past year.
- Almost half of the study participants, both American Indians and Whites, rank race relations as a top priority when compared to other important issues facing their community.
- The majority of study participants, both American Indians and Whites, say they would like to get to know people of other cultures and racial groups better.
- Study participants rank education, employment and income, social and civic engagement, and justice and the legal system as the top four most important areas in which to start addressing race relations and discrimination.

Background

The purpose of the Shared Vision initiative is to be a catalyst that encourages community members to work together to expand social, economic, educational, and leadership opportunities for people of all races. Shared Vision's activities are aimed at developing good cultural understanding and acceptance among American Indians and people of other races in the community and ensuring strong representation of American Indians in all aspects of community life. The initiative's intended outcomes are:

- To better understand cultural diversity issues
- To develop strategies to address discrimination and racial disparities
- To strengthen relationships between American Indian and White communities

Shared Vision is a collaborative effort of the Bemidji Area Race Relations Council and Bemidji Leads. Shared Vision is funded by Blandin Foundation, Neilson Foundation, and Northwest Minnesota Foundation. Shared Vision received Resolutions of Support from the Red Lake, White Earth, and Leech Lake Tribal Councils. Additional support is provided by Headwaters Regional Development Commission, Bemidji School District, North Country Regional Hospital, Paul Bunyan Telephone, Bemidji Area Chamber of Commerce, Bemidji Area Race Relations Council, and Beltrami County.

In July 2008, Shared Vision contracted with Wilder Research to assess Bemidji area residents' perceptions of community race relations, experiences with racial discrimination, and satisfaction with personal and community life. To gather community input, Wilder Research conducted focus groups with American Indian residents and subcontracted with Marketing Assistance & Research Solutions (MARS) at Bemidji State University to administer a survey to the general community, which was developed by Wilder Research with input from Shared Vision. The purpose of these activities was to gather information that can be used to stimulate community dialogue about race relations and racism in the Bemidji area and develop strategies to address these issues.

The results of this study can be used to inform Shared Vision as they move forward to develop a common vision of positive race relations in the Bemidji area and a plan to ensure that residents of all races have equal opportunities to participate in community life. Formal action steps are yet to be determined; proposed activities currently include: cultural events, community workshops, diversity training for local students and employees, and implementation of strategies designed to increase affordable housing access and recruitment and retention of qualified employees.

Methods and participant characteristics

Wilder Research designed a survey instrument in collaboration with the Shared Vision committee to address perceptions of community race relations, experiences with racial discrimination, and satisfaction with personal and community life. See the Appendix for the complete survey instrument. In order to gather feedback from a broad range of community voices, the survey was administered to three participant groups.

Group 1: Random sample

Wilder Research subcontracted with Marketing Assistance & Research Solutions (MARS) at Bemidji State University to mail the survey to a random sample of 2,000 households in two Bemidji city zip codes: 56601 and 56619. These two zip codes capture the majority of the population base for the City of Bemidji. (Wilder Research purchased the random sample of households from Survey Sampling International, Inc.) Selected households were given the option of completing the survey by mail or online via Survey Monkey™. MARS sent reminder postcards and made follow-up telephone calls to households that did not respond to the initial mailing. Between September and November 2008, MARS collected 407 completed surveys from the random sample, yielding a 20 percent response rate. This response rate is typical for a general population mail survey. The process of random selection, despite the less than optimal response rate, was successful in generating a sample that was broadly representative of the entire population of Bemidji. According to data from the 2000 U.S. Census, the characteristics of respondents in this group closely match Bemidji residents' actual characteristics for race and gender. Persons with higher education levels, persons with higher household incomes, and persons over age 65 were slightly over-represented in the pool of respondents compared to the actual population. As a result, caution should be used when interpreting the results from this group alone. However, when combined with the results of the other two participants groups (see paragraphs below) these data provide an overall picture of Bemidji area residents' perceptions and attitudes that we can be confident in.

Group 2: Media Response group

Bemidji area residents who were not included in the random sample were given an opportunity to complete the survey online via Survey Monkey™. This "opt-in" opportunity was advertised in local newspapers, on local radio shows, and in surrounding Indian Tribes' media (both print and online). MARS received 49 completed surveys from interested Bemidji area residents. Respondents from this group also tended to be higher educated than the general population, but were also younger and more diverse than the respondents in the random sample (two-thirds of the media response group was American Indian). Thus, responses from this group can be used to improve the representativeness

of the random sample by providing needed age and race balance. Because these individuals were willing to take the time and initiative to complete the survey without being individually selected, it is reasonable to assume that these respondents have strong feelings (either positive or negative) about race relations in the community. Although not representative of the general population, the perspectives of these respondents provide added depth and value to the overall results of this study and are especially helpful when added to the race-specific samples used for comparative analysis (see p. 6).

Group 3: Focus group participants

Wilder Research worked in cooperation with Headwaters Regional Development Commission and three Tribal organizations to conduct focus groups with American Indians living in the Bemidji area and in surrounding Indian Reservation communities. Wilder Research designed the focus group protocol, facilitated the discussion groups, and analyzed the data obtained from these groups. Groups were selected to represent the major American Indian Tribes in the Bemidji area. They included: American Indian residents of Bemidji, Leech Lake Reservation, Red Lake Reservation, and White Earth Reservation. During October and November 2008, 45 people participated in one of these focus group discussions and also completed a post-discussion survey identical to the one completed by the random sample and the media response groups described above. Survey results from the three reservation area groups provide a valuable reservation perspective; one of the fundamental goals of this study. See Figure 1 for residence area of focus group participants. See the Appendix for the list of focus group questions.

1. Residence area of focus group participant

Focus group	Number of participants
Bemidji	8
Leech Lake Reservation	12
Red Lake Reservation	9
White Earth Reservation	16
Total	45

Overall perspective and analysis

Together, the results of these three groups (random sample, media response, and focus group participants) provide a credible overall picture of Bemidji area residents' perceptions and attitudes towards race and equality issues in the community. See Figure 2 for a comparison of respondent characteristics for these groups.

2. Respondent characteristics

Race	Random sample (N=407)	Media response sample (N=49)	Focus group sample (N=45)
American Indian	8%	66%	98%
White	88%	23%	-
Other race	4%	11%	2%
Location			
City of Bemidji	36%	22%	25%
Greater Bemidji area	61%	46%	5%
Indian Reservation	2%	32%	65%
Other nearby township	1%	-	5%
Gender			
Male	54%	46%	31%
Female	46%	54%	69%
Age			
Under 25	1%	11%	5%
25 to 44	23%	39%	50%
45 to 64	53%	48%	19%
65+	23%	2%	26%
Highest education level			
Less than high school	3%	2%	10%
High school or GED	24%	4%	21%
Associate's Degree or some college	27%	35%	48%
Bachelor's Degree	24%	48%	12%
Professional or graduate degree	22%	11%	9%
Household income			
Under \$25,000	20%	19%	57%
\$25,000 to \$49,000	32%	45%	32%
\$50,000 or more	48%	36%	11%

The majority of respondents in this study identified as either American Indian (N=102) or White (N=348). For analysis purposes, data obtained from respondents using the three sampling methods described above were regrouped into the following analytic categories: White residents of the Bemidji area, American Indian residents of the Bemidji area, and American Indians living on nearby reservations. Data for these comparative groups are provided throughout the report to address the central question of this study: How do Whites and American Indians living in Bemidji and American Indians living on nearby reservations view the current state of race relations in the community? Further, where do differences in attitudes and experiences exist? Where is there evidence of common ground?

Twenty-four respondents identified with a race other than American Indian or White – just over half of this group identified as “mixed-race.” While their numbers are too small to be considered representative (and therefore not included in the detailed analysis of this report) it is important to consider and understand the perspectives of this group. Key findings from this group can be found on p. 7 of this report.

Findings

This report provides a comparative analysis of the perceptions and attitudes of White residents of Bemidji, American Indian residents of Bemidji, and American Indians living on nearby reservations. The findings from this study are presented as narrative along with illustrative charts.

Specifically, the analytical categories in these charts include:

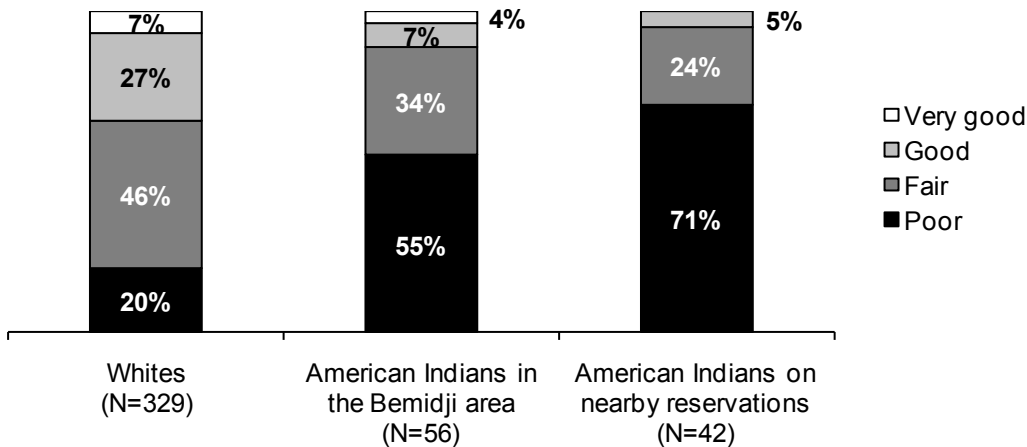
- White residents of the Bemidji area – includes all White respondents; a majority of whom participated via the random sample and a few of whom are part of the media response group who completed the “opt-in” survey online
- American Indian residents of Bemidji the area – includes American Indian respondents who were part of the random sample, media response group, or Bemidji focus group
- American Indians living on nearby reservations – includes American Indian respondents who live on Leech Lake, Red Lake, or White Earth Reservation; the majority of whom participated in focus groups and a few of whom are part of the media response group or random sample group

Twenty-four respondents who participated in this study identified with a race other than American Indian or White – just over half of this group identified as “mixed-race.” Their numbers are too small to be considered representative and for that reason have been omitted from these charts, however it is important to consider the perspectives of this group. Overall, respondents in this “other race(s)” category (N=24) were more positive about the current state of race relations than American Indian respondents. They were also much more likely to agree that equal opportunities for education, employment, and treatment by law enforcement existed for people of all races in their community. In addition, they were less likely to report an experience with racial discrimination in the past year. Readers should keep in mind these findings as they compare and contrast the attitudes and experiences of respondents who represent the primary racial groups in the Bemidji area (American Indian and White) and develop strategies for moving forward.

Overall perceptions of community race relations in Bemidji

Study participants were asked to rate their overall perception of race relations in the Bemidji area. The majority of residents in this study rated current race relations as “fair.” Whites were most likely to rate race relations in the Bemidji area as “fair” whereas American Indians, particularly those living on nearby reservations, were most likely to rate race relations in the Bemidji area as “poor.” See Figure 3.

3. Respondents' rating of race relations in the community



Below are a few selected comments by study participants that illustrate the current state of race relations in the Bemidji area:

Being a Native American is hard in Bemidji because some of the residents and shop owners are uneducated and scared of Native Americans. I have personally seen both the good and bad. (American Indian participant)

I am often resented and hated by American Indian people simply because I am a Norwegian American. (White participant)

I usually pass as non-Indian in many locales or situations in numerous states and in Bemidji, I have heard the most derogatory and hate focused comments on a very regular basis concerning gaming, hunting and fishing, and housing... (American Indian participant)

When I moved to the Bemidji area in 2001, I was shocked at the level of racism between Whites and Natives and how open and accepted that racism is. (White participant)

I am over 80 years old and grew up near the Red Lake Reservation. Our generation got along well with that generation of Indians. But, as years have gone by, the younger generations – both White and Indian – have gotten more overbearing. (White participant)

When I grew up in Bemidji in the 1960s-1970s, lots of Native kids were with us but we did not think of them as “Native.” They were just...Morgan, Jim, Ron and Linda. Now Native people try to look and act different. I think we have gone backwards. (White participant)

I believe that reverse-discrimination is rampant in our community. Minorities have more opportunities for educational advantages as it pertains to funding than do White Anglo-Saxons. I also feel as though minorities have been given advantages that are not utilized by them. (White participant)

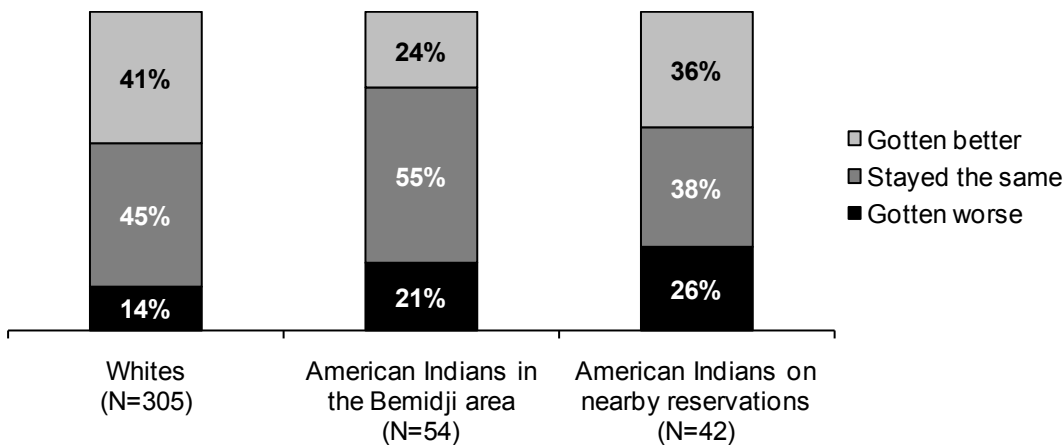
The community makes the effort but minorities aren't willing participate, [instead they] just complain of being picked on and discriminated against. (White participant)

It's really racial. You get treated differently in a lot of places. (American Indian participant)

[White residents] think we think we are entitled and we don't. (American Indian participant)

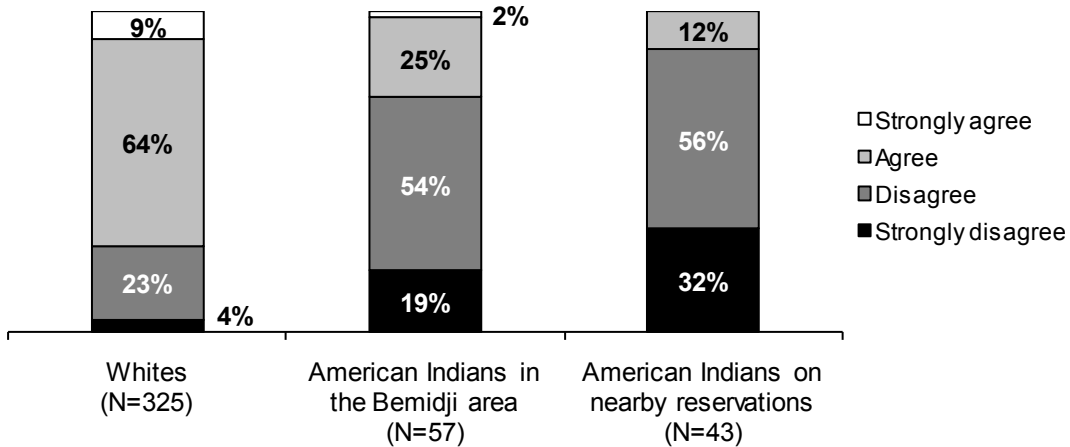
When asked how race relations in the Bemidji area have changed over the past five years, a majority of respondents said that race relations have stayed the same or gotten better. Respondents' perceptions of how race relations have changed over time do not differ greatly by race, although American Indian respondents were somewhat more likely to report that things have gotten worse. See Figure 4.

4. Respondents' perception of change in Bemidji area race relations over the past five years



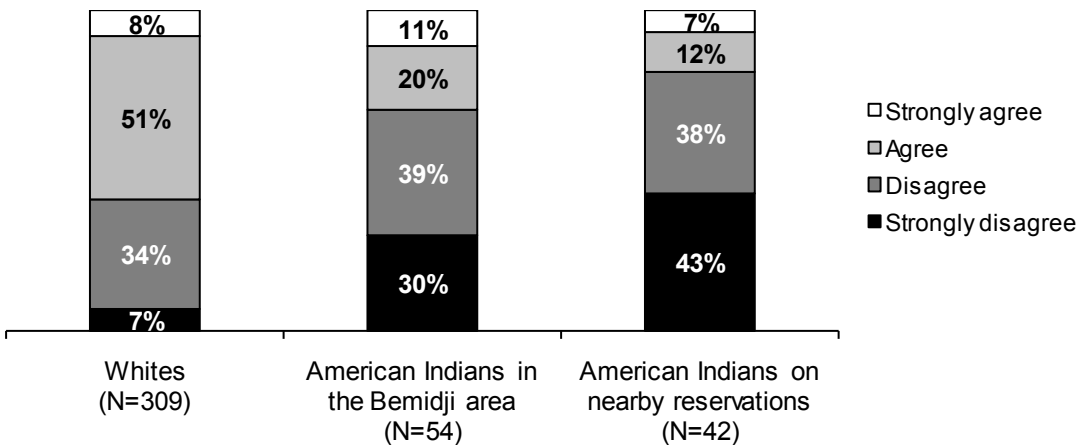
More than two-thirds of White respondents agree or strongly agree that the Bemidji area is a welcoming community to people of all races, whereas a majority of American Indian respondents disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. See Figure 5.

5. Respondents' views on whether the Bemidji area is welcoming to people of all races



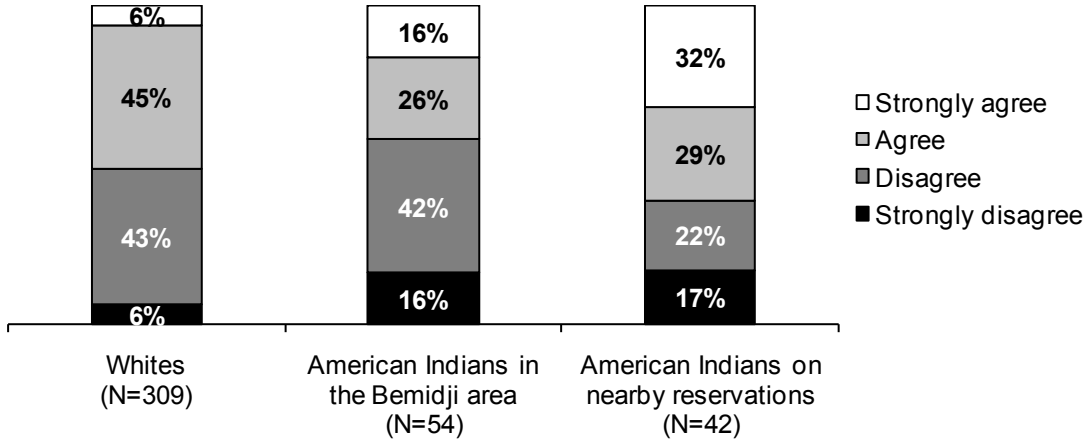
Three-fifths of White respondents agree or strongly agree that racial diversity in the Bemidji area is one of the community's strengths, compared to about one-third of American Indian respondents who live in the Bemidji area and less than one-fifth of American Indian respondents who live on nearby reservations. See Figure 6.

6. Respondents' views on whether diversity is one of the Bemidji area's strengths



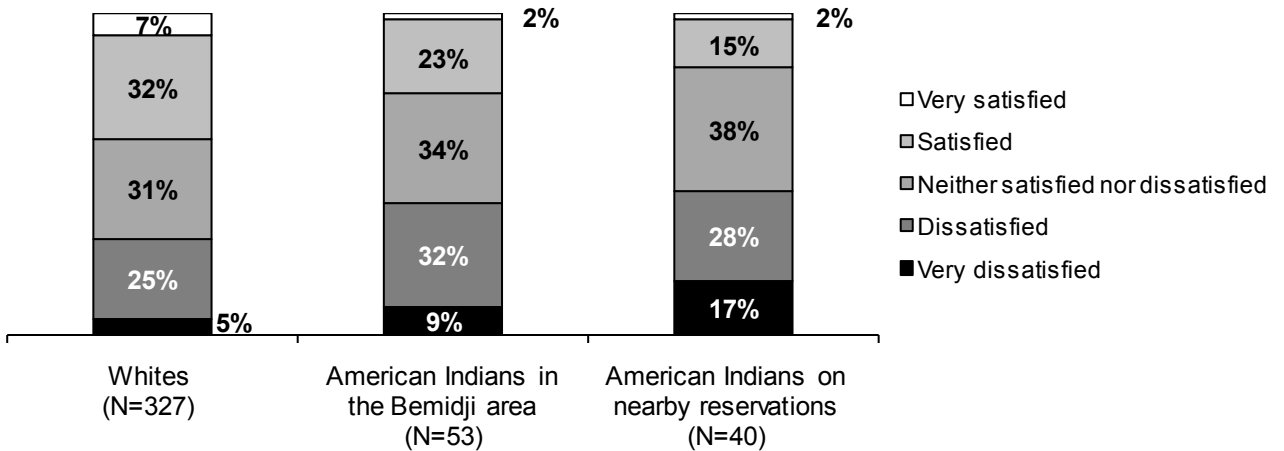
When asked if race relations is a top priority for their community when compared to other important issues, more than three-fifths of American Indians from nearby reservations and two-fifths of American Indians from the Bemidji area agree or strongly agree. About half of White respondents in the Bemidji area agree or strongly agree with this statement. See Figure 7.

7. Respondents' views on whether race relations are a top priority when compared with other important issues



When asked about how satisfied they are with how well different groups in society get along with each other, White respondents were more likely to be satisfied than American Indian respondents, although neither group had an overall high level of satisfaction in this area. See Figure 8.

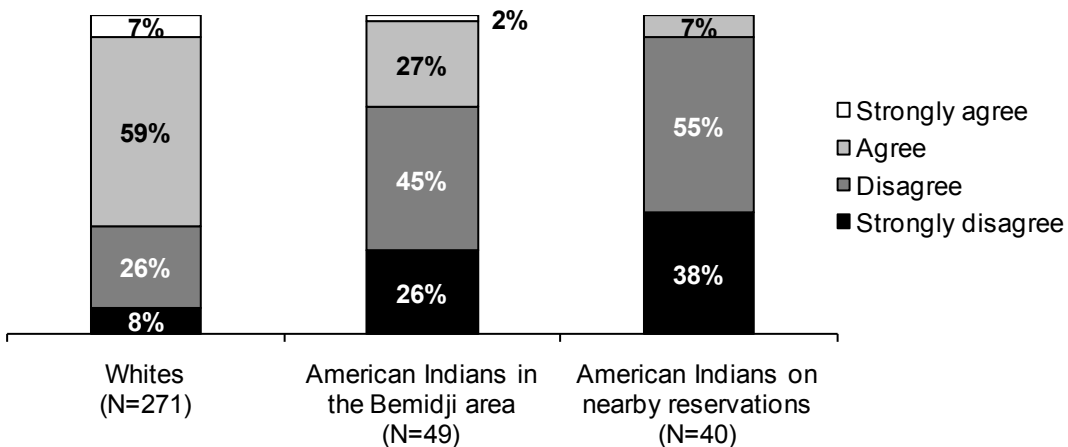
8. Respondents' level of satisfaction with how well different groups in society get along with each other



Community leadership's response to race issues in Bemidji

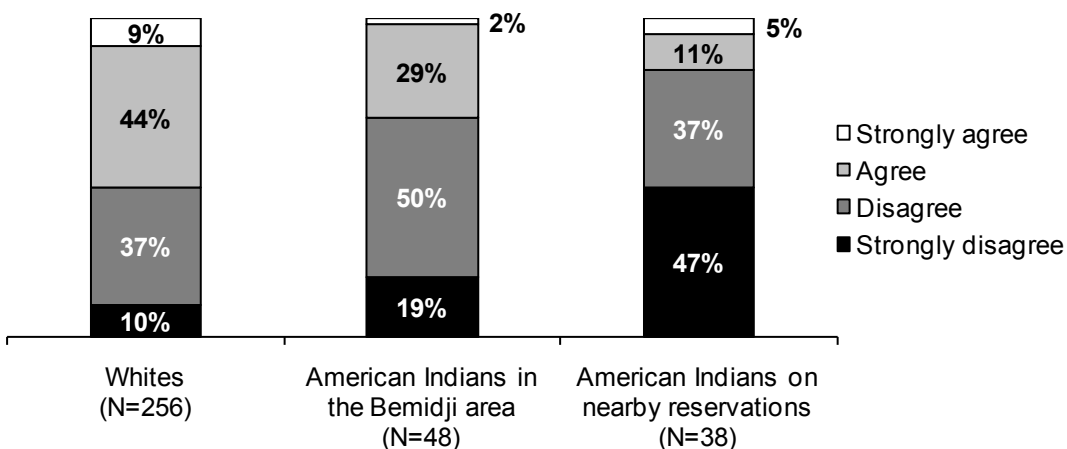
Respondents' perceptions of how well Bemidji area leaders work together to address diversity issues differs greatly by race. Two-thirds of White respondents agree or strongly agree that community leaders work well together, but the majority of American Indians disagree or strongly disagree, particularly those who live on nearby reservations. See Figure 9.

9. Residents' views on whether community leaders work well together to address diversity issues



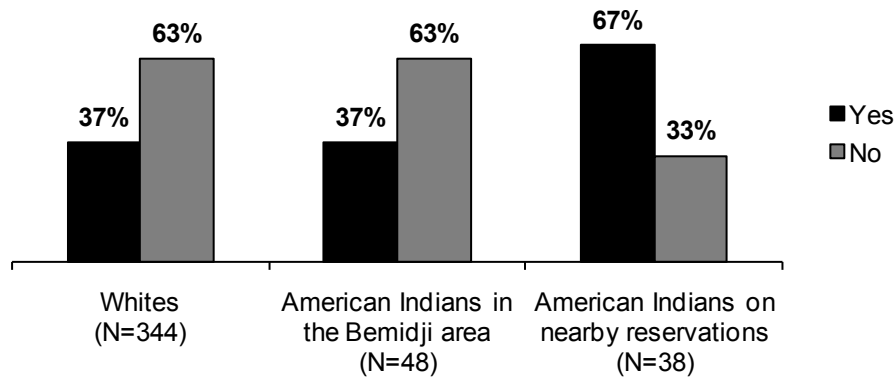
About half of White respondents and one-third of American Indian respondents who live in the Bemidji area agree or strongly agree that local government decision makers listen to them. American Indians who live on nearby reservations are least likely to feel listed to. See Figure 10.

10. Respondents' views on whether they feel listened to by local government decision makers

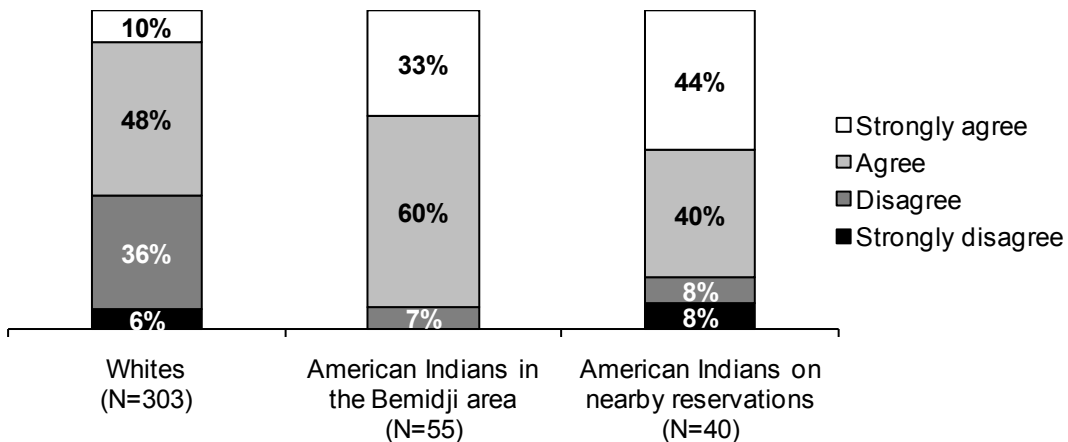


Less than half of respondents report that they have ever been asked to serve in a leadership position in their community. American Indian respondents on nearby reservations were more likely than American Indian respondents in the Bemidji area to report being asked to serve their community in this way. Also, American Indians were more likely than Whites to participate in situations where they are the minority. See Figures 11 and 12.

11. Whether respondents have been asked to serve in a leadership position in their community

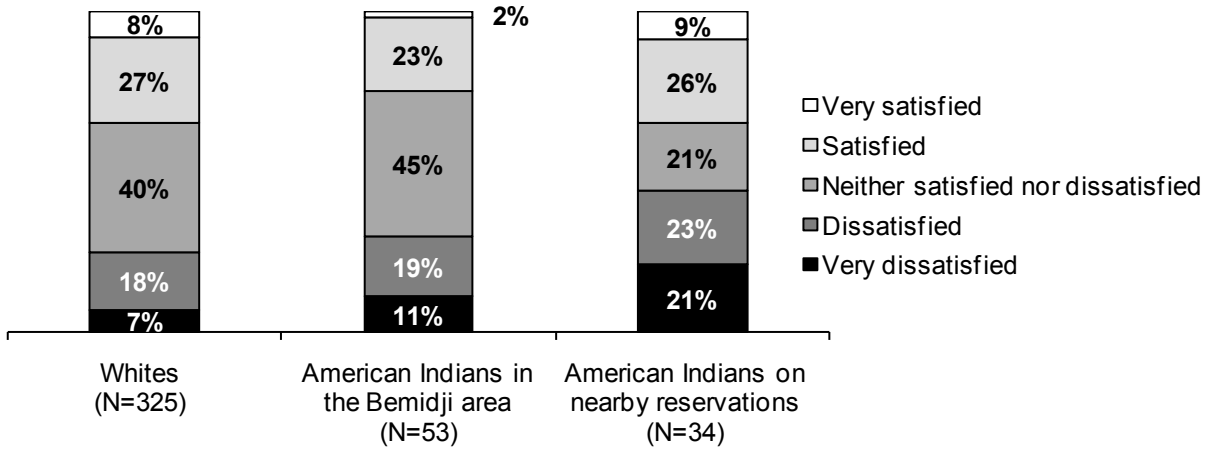


12. Respondents' views on whether they usually participate in situations where they are the minority



Overall, about one-third of the residents in this study are satisfied with their ability to influence local decision makers. American Indians on nearby reservations were slightly more likely than other groups of respondents to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied in this area. See Figure 13.

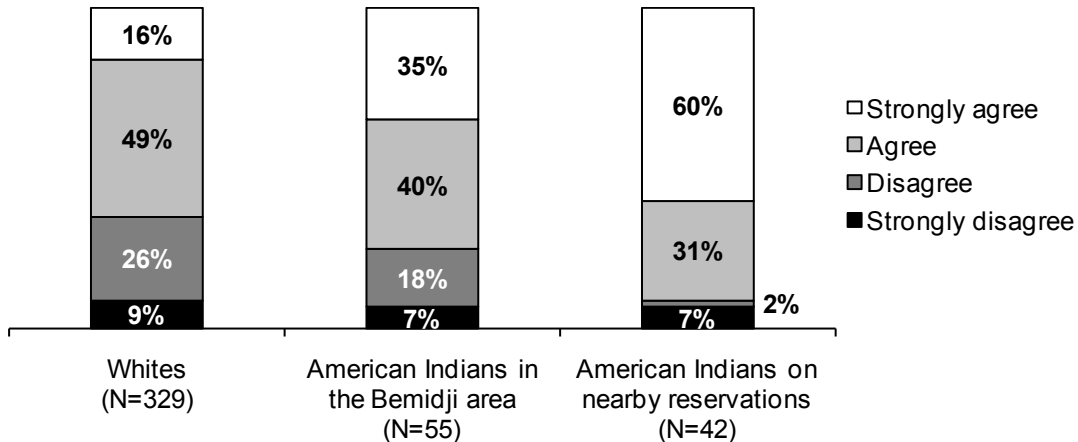
13. Respondents' level of satisfaction with their ability to influence local decision makers



Perceptions of equal opportunity and experiences

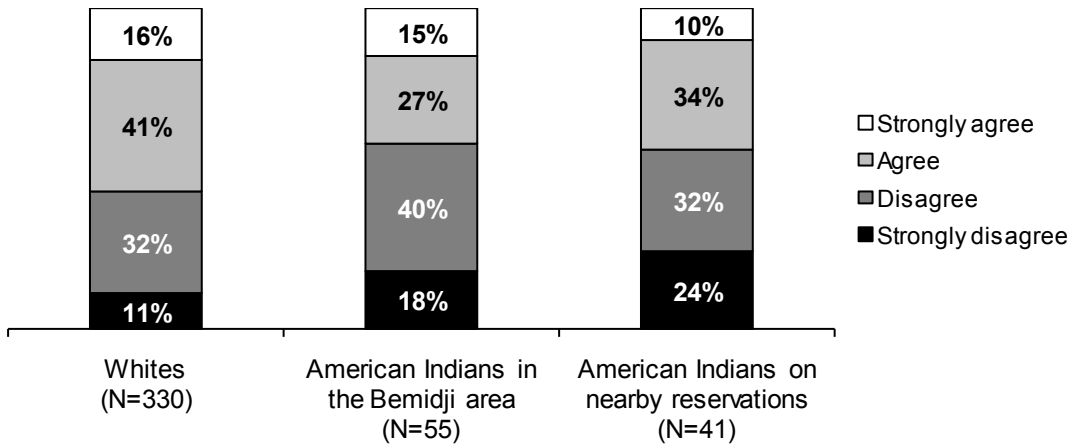
When asked whether generations of racism and discrimination make it harder for minority groups to achieve their goals, about two-thirds of respondents overall agree or strongly agree with this statement. American Indians, particularly those who live on nearby reservations, were more likely than White respondents to agree or strongly agree. See Figure 14.

14. Respondents' views on whether generations of discrimination make it harder for minority groups to achieve their goals

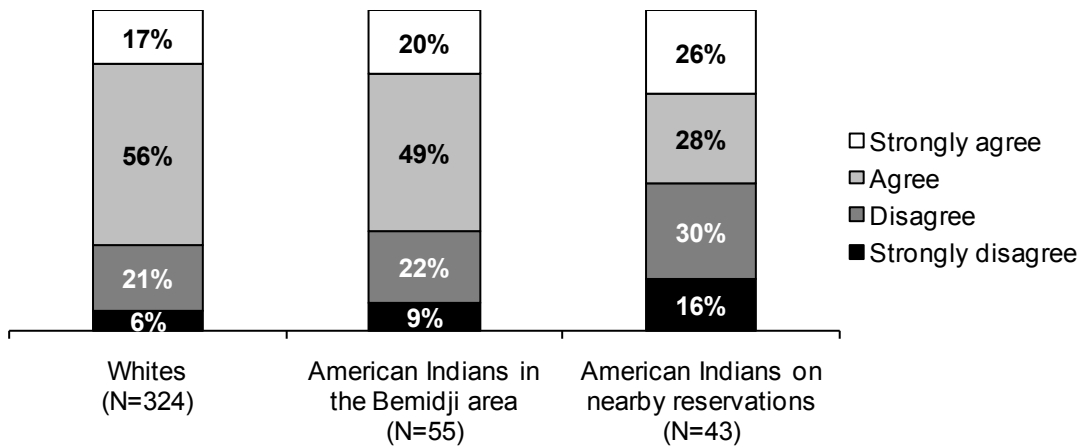


A majority of respondents either agree or strongly agree that generations of discrimination have had a negative impact on underrepresented groups' ability to achieve their goals and about three-fifths of White respondents believe they have certain advantages in life because of their race. Both American Indian and White respondents are more likely to acknowledge the racial advantages of persons outside their own racial group than to acknowledge the advantages they have experienced because of their own race. See Figures 15 and 16.

15. Respondents' views on whether they have advantages in life because of their race



16. Respondents' views on whether people of other races have advantages in life because of their race



When asked about personal experiences with racial and ethnic discrimination, both American Indian and White respondents reported that they have been discriminated against in one or more areas of community life because of their race in the last year. As expected, American Indian respondents were much more likely than White respondents to report being discriminated against. See Figure 17.

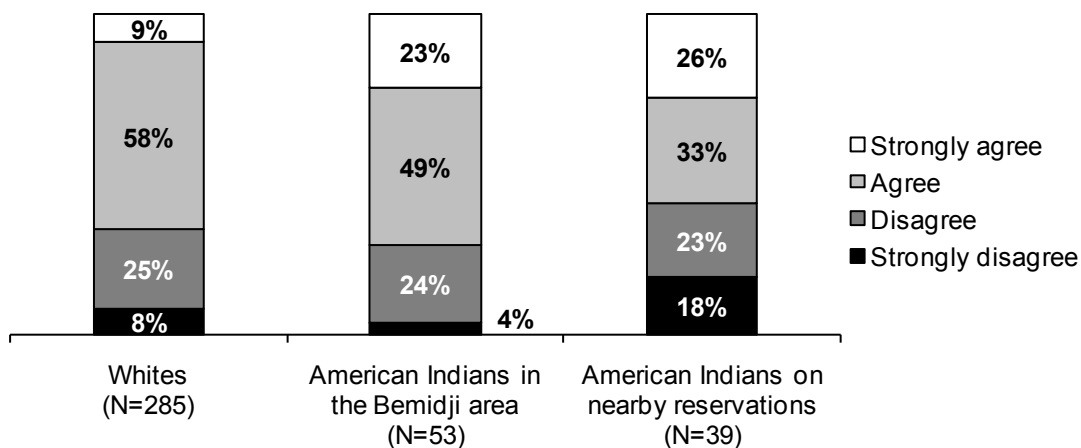
17. Highest frequency of discrimination reported by respondents

Participant group	On a very regular basis	Several times	Once or twice	Never
American Indians living on nearby reservations	42%	35%	21%	2%
American Indians living in Bemidji area	35%	21%	30%	14%
Whites living in Bemidji area	7%	7%	16%	70%

Housing

Although American Indians in Minnesota’s Northwest Continuum of Care Region (which includes the Bemidji area) experience homelessness at a rate greater than Whites,¹ about two-thirds of respondents agree or strongly agree that homelessness affects people of all races in their community equally. American Indians and Whites do not differ significantly in their beliefs on this issue. See Figure 18.

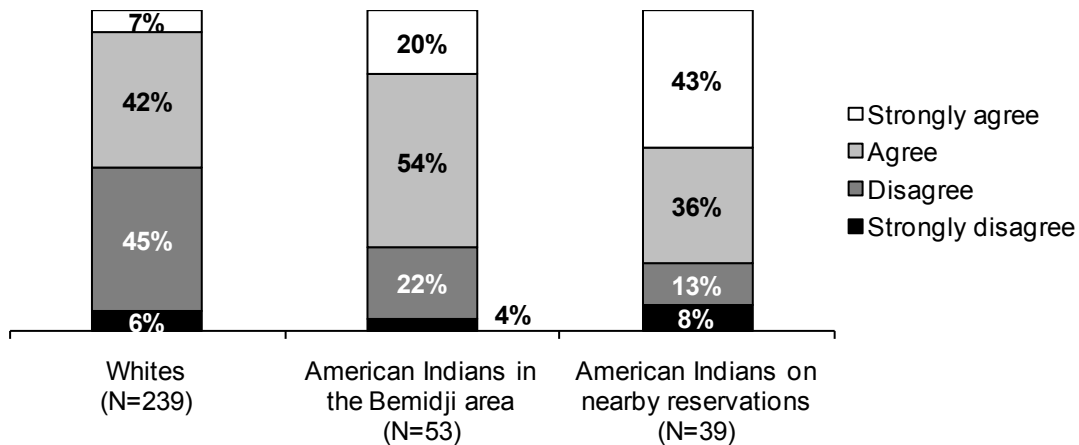
18. Respondents’ views on whether homelessness affects people of all races equally in their community



¹ Overview of Homelessness in Minnesota 2006, Wilder Research (2007).

About three-quarters of American Indian respondents agree or strongly agree that discrimination in housing is a problem in the community compared to about half of White respondents. See Figure 19.

19. Respondents' views on whether discrimination in the housing market is a problem in the community



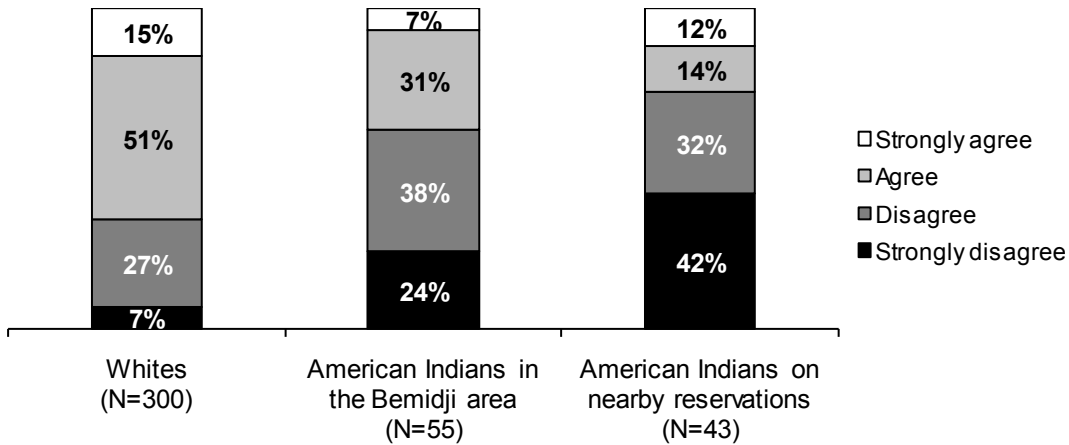
Half of American Indian respondents say they have experienced housing discrimination due to race in the past year, while only 3 percent of White respondents say they have experienced this type of discrimination. In addition, Whites are more likely to report satisfaction with their present housing, particularly when compared to American Indians who live on nearby reservations (see Figure 27 on p. 25). Below are a few selected comments by study participants regarding discrimination in housing:

- I think Native Americans have it made in the shade when they want to get an apartment. They get help from all directions for the deposit, whereas White people who work and have two jobs can't come up the money needed for an apartment. (White participant)
- If you go to see a place and they see you're Native they say they already rented it. (American Indian participant)
- They'll go through the motions of showing you the place, but you can tell they're not interested by how they treat you. (American Indian participant)
- Housing is very hard for our Indian people because of racial disparity and they often don't fight for their rights. (American Indian participant)

Employment

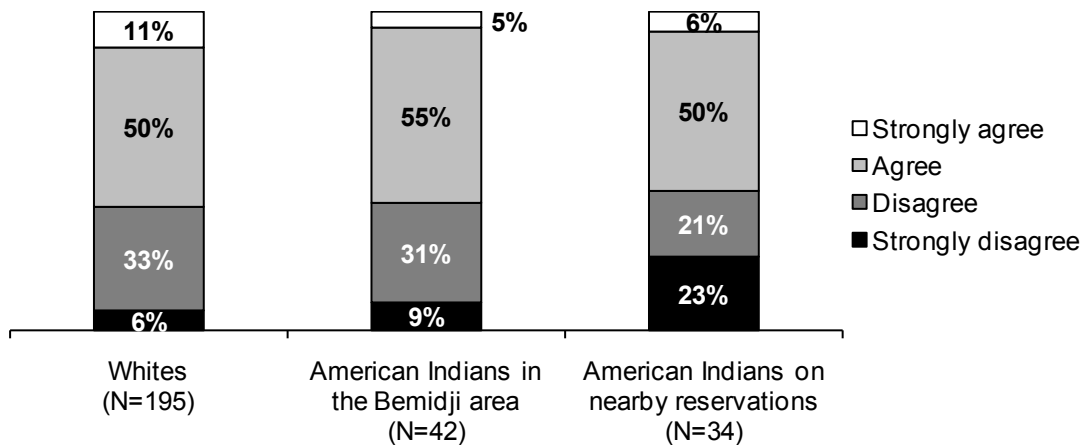
Respondents' beliefs about equal employment opportunities differ greatly by race. About two-thirds of White participants agree that qualified workers of all races have equal opportunities to apply for and obtain jobs in the community, compared to only about one-quarter of American Indian respondents on nearby reservations and two-fifths of American Indian respondents in the Bemidji area. See Figure 20.

20. Respondents' views on whether people of all races have an equal opportunity to apply for and get jobs in the community



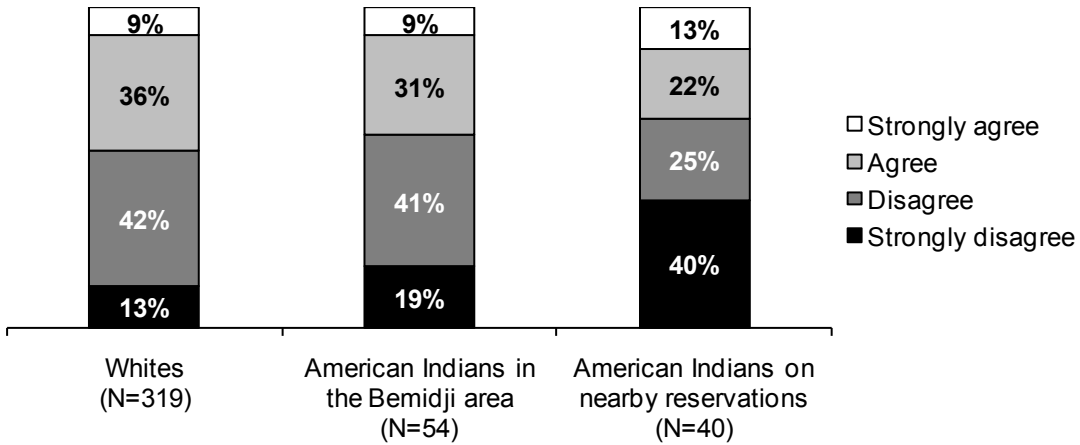
When asked about applying for jobs online, about three-fifths of respondents agree or strongly agree that the process is easy for them. There does not appear to be a significant difference between White and American Indian respondents. See Figure 21.

21. Respondents' views on whether applying for jobs online is easy



Less than half of respondents believe that people who are poor or unemployed are in that situation because of their own lack of effort. White respondents are no more likely to agree with this statement than American Indian respondents. See Figure 22.

22. Respondents' views on whether people who are poor or unemployed are in that situation because they lack effort



Approximately half of American Indian respondents say they have experienced employment discrimination due to race in the past year, while only one in ten White participants say they have experienced employment discrimination. Both Whites and American Indians report overall high levels of satisfaction with their employment; however, Whites are more likely to report income satisfaction especially when compared to American Indians living on nearby reservations (see Figure 27 on p. 25).

Below are a few selected comments from study participants regarding employment discrimination:

- I believe minorities are rarely hired for county, government, higher paying jobs in this community because of their race. (American Indian participant)
- People do have an equal opportunity to get jobs which they are qualified for, but there are no Indians that are qualified. (White participant)
- There are some businesses in Bemidji that do embrace change and do try to have diversity training to educate their employees. (American Indian participant)
- I believe poverty and hopelessness are greater obstacles to success than racism. I believe most of us in the majority race would like minorities to succeed, but that they are limited by conditions our ancestors forced upon them. (White participant)

I feel that minorities (Native Americans) a lot of times play the “race card” when things do not go their way. I believe everyone, regardless of race, has many opportunities to succeed in Bemidji. Whether or not a person chooses to capitalize on those opportunities is up to them. (White participant)

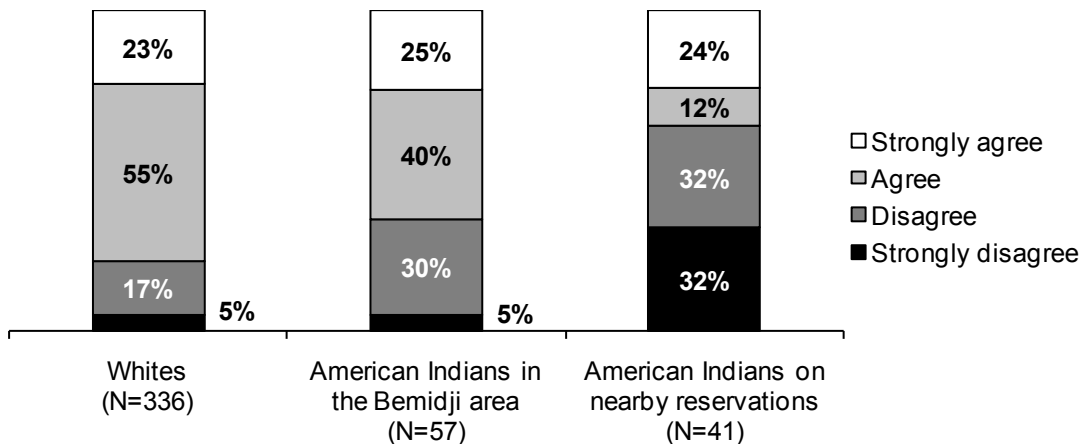
I don’t think that Native Americans are discriminated in our community as much as they think they are. I come in contact with many people at my job and when I do have an encounter with a Native American they usually pull the race card and say “it’s because I’m Native.” (American Indian participant)

Caucasians are the ones who are being treated unfairly in this area. Jobs are being given to Native Americans first... (White participant)

Education

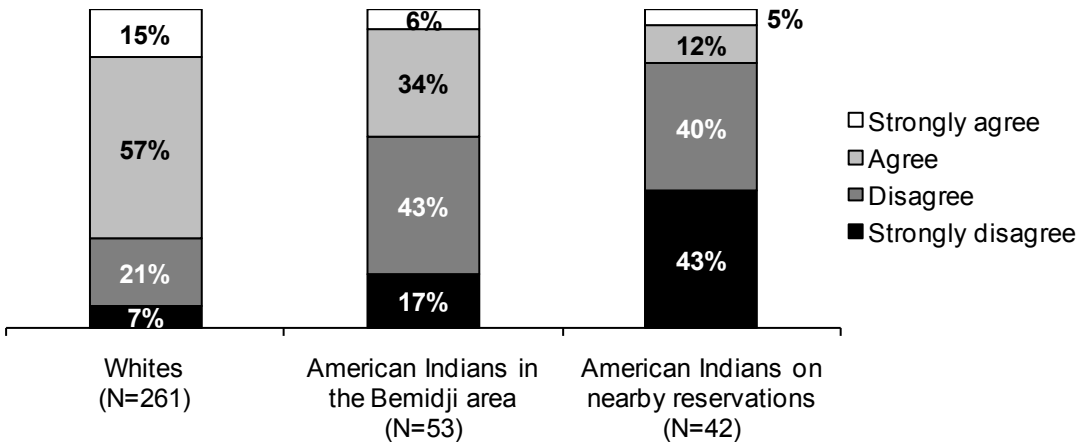
Bemidji area residents’ beliefs about equal education opportunities differ greatly by race. More than three-quarters of White respondents agree or strongly agree that people of all races have an equal opportunity to obtain a quality education in the community. American Indians who live in the Bemidji area are also likely to agree with this statement, but only about one-third of American Indians who live on nearby reservations agree or strongly agree. See Figure 23.

23. Respondents’ views on whether people of all races have an equal opportunity to receive a quality education in the community



Perceptions of fair treatment in the educational system also differ greatly by race. Nearly three-quarters of White respondents agree that people of all races are treated fairly by education faculty and staff, compared to only one-fifth of American Indian respondents in the Bemidji area and less than one-fifth of American Indian respondents on nearby reservations. See Figure 24.

24. Respondents' views on whether people of all races are treated fairly by education faculty and staff in their community



Approximately half of American Indian respondents say they have experienced discrimination in education due to race in the past year, while only 4 percent of White respondents say they have experienced this type of discrimination. Both Whites and American Indians living in the Bemidji area report overall high levels of satisfaction with their own education. However, Whites are more likely than American Indians to be satisfied with the education their children are getting (see Figure 27 on p. 25).

Below are a few selected comments from study participants about racial discrimination in education:

- Though there is an equal opportunity for quality education, some students from racially or culturally or economically different homes will bring valid approaches to their own learning, which are often rejected by the educational system. (Mixed-race participant)
- If you look at the curriculum used in our schools from a racial perspective, our kids are not taught about Indian people even here on the reservation. (American Indian participant)
- You are treated fairly in higher education, but you are not treated fairly in our K thru 12 school system. (White participant)

My son...had such a hard time [in high school] that the counselor recommended that he flunk out of school and get a job. (American Indian participant)

I attend Bemidji State University and most times White people won't even sit by me in class. I wonder why [because] I don't smell and I'm not stupid... (American Indian participant)

I think diversity is more in tune at the University [Bemidji State] and that people of different races are more accepted by educated people than uneducated people. (White participant)

All people do not have equal opportunity at a college education. Many people need to get loans for their entire education. American Indians are basically entitled to a free education. That's what I've been told by some of Native American friends. I probably shouldn't assume it's true though. (White participant)

I experienced an episode that appeared to be reverse discrimination when the school did not take action after my (White) child was physically threatened by a Native American child. I was told to be understanding and they offered counseling to the perpetrator, while my child was afraid to be alone at school. (White participant)

There are times when Indian students accuse school staff/administration of practicing racism when it is their own bad behavior that is at fault. (White participant)

I work in the school system. Extreme measures are taken to provide Natives with a good education. Their willingness to accept the opportunity is marginal at best. (White participant)

Health care and government services

More than four-fifths of White respondents are satisfied with their access to health care, however less than two-thirds of American Indian participants are (see Figure 27 on p. 25).

Over half of American Indian respondents say they have experienced discrimination in health care due to race in the past year, compared to only 8 percent of White respondents. The same is true for government services. American Indians who live on nearby reservations are more likely to report racial discrimination in health care and government services than American Indians who live in the Bemidji area. Below are a few selected comments from study participants about their perceptions of equality in health care and government services:

Health care providers are especially discriminatory toward Native Americans and tend to dismiss their problems. (White participant)

What Whites don't realize is that the health care we get through public services is very poor. (American Indian participant)

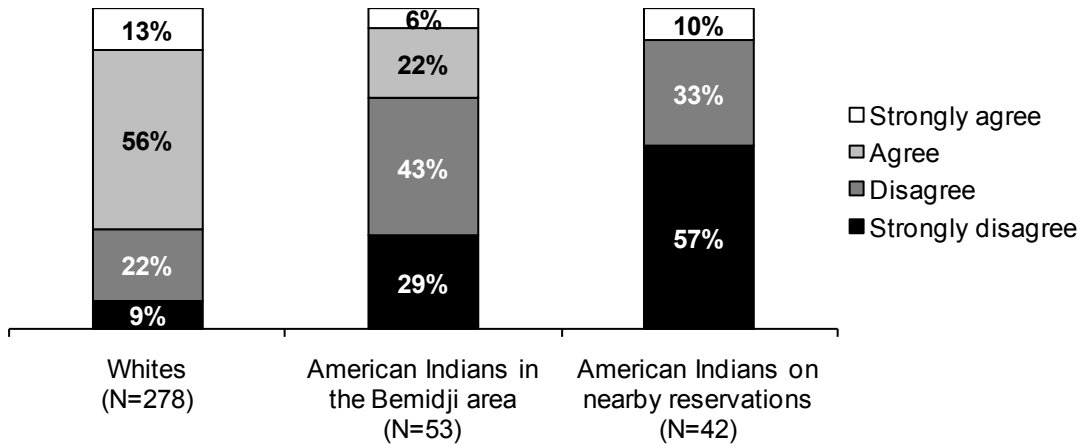
There are no people of color working in government – hardly any people of color in the workforce here at all. How can people be fair when they don't know any people of color and they don't work with people of color? (African American participant)

I feel that the Native Americans have more opportunities for education, housing, medical than anyone else. (Latino participant)

Public safety and law enforcement

Perceptions of equality within the eyes of the law differ greatly by race. More than two-thirds of White respondents in the Bemidji area believe that people of all races in the community are being stopped by law enforcement at an equal rate compared to about one-quarter of American Indian respondents in the Bemidji area. American Indian respondents on nearby reservations are even less likely to agree with this statement. See Figure 25.

25. Respondents' views on whether people of all races in the community are stopped equally by law enforcement



More than two-thirds of American Indian respondents say they have experienced racial discrimination by law enforcement in the past year, while only 4 percent of White respondents say they have experienced this type of discrimination. Among American Indians who have experienced this type of discrimination, 25 percent say it happens on a very regular basis. In addition, American Indians are more likely to report an experience with racial discrimination in the court system than Whites.

Below are a few selected comments from study participants about racial discrimination by law enforcement:

I strongly agree that the Native American community is treated unfairly because of their race. I have been treated like I am a thief and stopped by local police because of my reservation plates. (American Indian participant)

I was followed home a few times. I just wish they would have pulled me over and got it over with. This time I chose to keep state plates on my car. (American Indian participant)

I was in court once and the guy before me, a Caucasian man, was in on the same charges as me, and he received a lesser penalty than me. (American Indian participant)

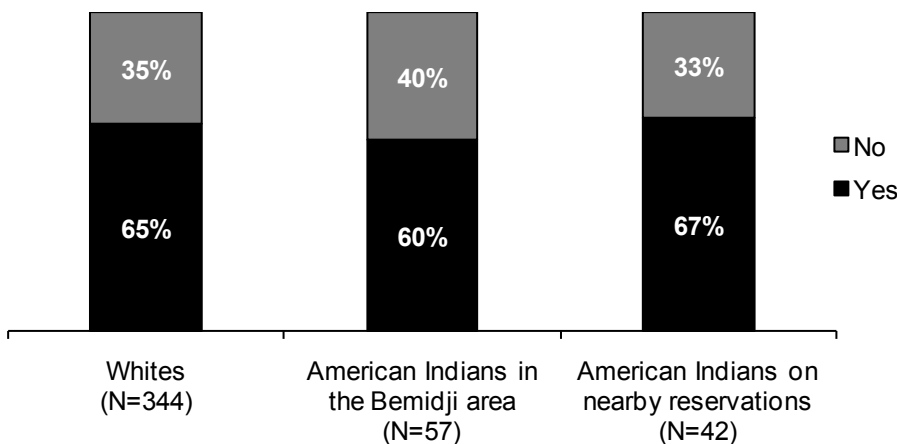
Minorities are stopped by police more often as they represent a disproportionately higher incidence of crime. (White participant)

Law enforcement stops Indians because the vast majority of them are probably doing something wrong at the time. (White participant)

Community and social activities

When asked about participation in community life, about two-thirds of respondents say they have volunteered in the community in the past year. Volunteer rates are high for both Whites and American Indians. See Figure 26.

26. Whether or not respondents have volunteered in their community during the past year



I am Caucasian so I have never experienced a lot of racism, but my boyfriend is Native American. I have witnessed racism against him and other members in his family by the police department, local restaurants, and stores in Bemidji. I never noticed racism until I was with someone who experiences it on a daily basis.
(White participant)

Some kids have parents who don't teach them any rules...or things they're going to need to not live on the reservation. They don't have any respect towards other people's property. They have no manners...I will not take them to the store with me. (American Indian participant)

I work in retail as a manager. I provide equal opportunity and I hope others do the same. From my point of view, racism is bad. I get ignored and called names by other (customers) for doing my job – they are very racist names and I am White. Racism is much worse here [in Bemidji] than in the Twin Cities where I am from. (White participant)

When I ask a Native American customer if they need any help I either get a nasty look and a snide "no" or I am ignored completely. If I reproach them later to see if they are still doing okay they accuse me of thinking they are stealing, so they swear at me and storm out. I had one girl threaten to beat me up because I told her not to swear in the store. (White participant)

I have had to deal with Native Americans when shopping. Some are quite nice, but there are so many younger [people with] rude, bad attitudes. There are also some older [people] with the same "White people owe us" mentality. I stand there in line...watch them use their EBT cards for hundreds of dollars of food. Are they working twelve-hour days? My family suffers from not having me around home, does theirs? (White participant)

See Figure 28 for a breakdown of where American Indian respondents have experienced racial discrimination most in the past year.

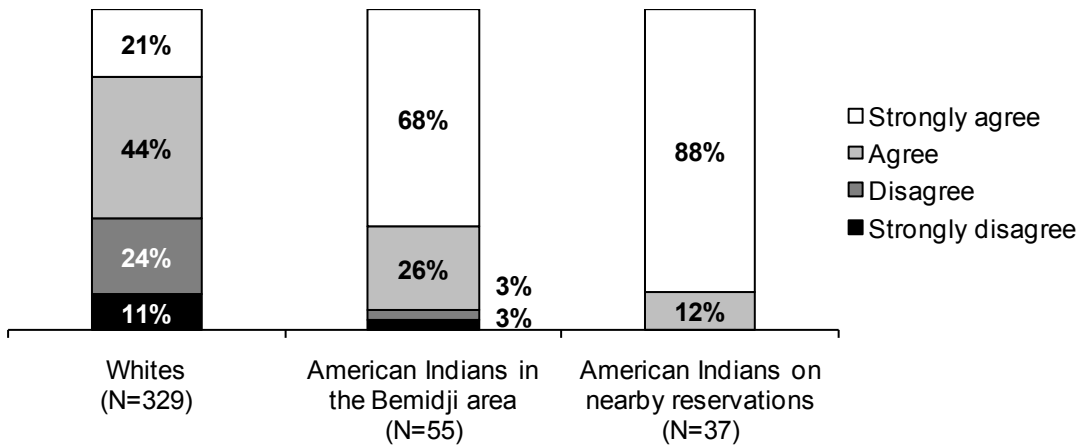
28. Proportion of American Indian respondents who have experienced discrimination due to race in the past year either several times or on a very regular basis by area

Area	Several times or on a very regular basis
Retail shopping	50%
Law enforcement	46%
Community in general	44%
Restaurants, bars, theatres, and other entertainment	36%
Courts	35%
Employment	31%
Hunting and fishing rights	31%
Housing	26%
Sports	25%
Government services	24%
Health care	23%
Local media (newspaper, radio, TV)	20%
Education	17%

Treaty rights

The majority of respondents agree that we must honor and uphold hunting, fishing, and gathering rights guaranteed to American Indians by treaties. However, American Indian respondents are more likely than White respondents to support this notion. Three-quarters of American Indians strongly agree with this statement, but only one-fifth of Whites do. See Figure 29.

29. Respondents' views on whether we should uphold hunting, fishing, and gathering rights guaranteed to American Indians by treaties



Nine out of ten White respondents say they have not experienced racial discrimination with respect to hunting and fishing rights in the past year, but nearly half of American Indians say that they have. Below are a few selected comments from study participants regarding the issue of treaty rights:

I guess that we should uphold hunting, fishing and gathering rights that were guaranteed to American Indians by treaties, but the money that the rest of us pay to preserve those resources is something that we should all, including Native Americans, pay for. (White participant)

The treaties are ancient and no longer serve a purpose – this situation creates racial biases. My grandparents immigrated to the U.S. and worked hard at assimilating rather than asking for special treatment. (White participant)

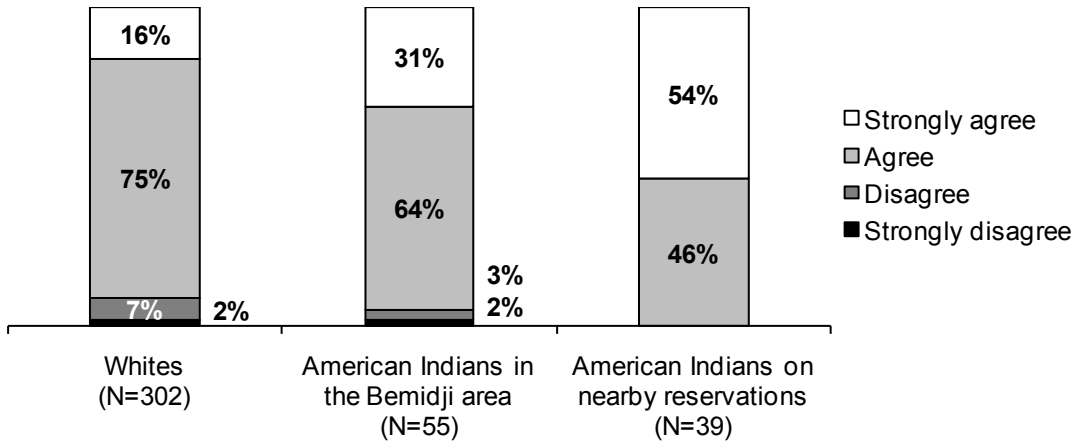
Everyone should have the same hunting and fishing seasons. Allowing a certain race to have different hunting or fishing rights than other races is in itself racist. (White participant)

Some [American Indians] use fishing and hunting rights to net walleye and sell it to people outside of reservation borders. This is unfair. (White participant)

Building bridges and addressing racial discrimination

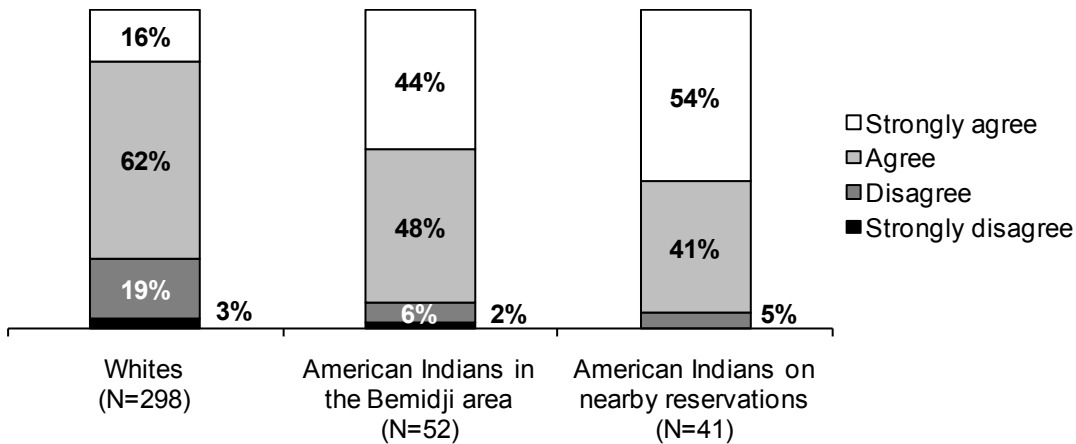
When asked about future interaction with other races and cultures, most White and American Indian respondents say that they would like to better get to know people from other racial and cultural groups. See Figure 30.

30. Respondents' views on whether they would like to better get to know people from other cultural and racial groups



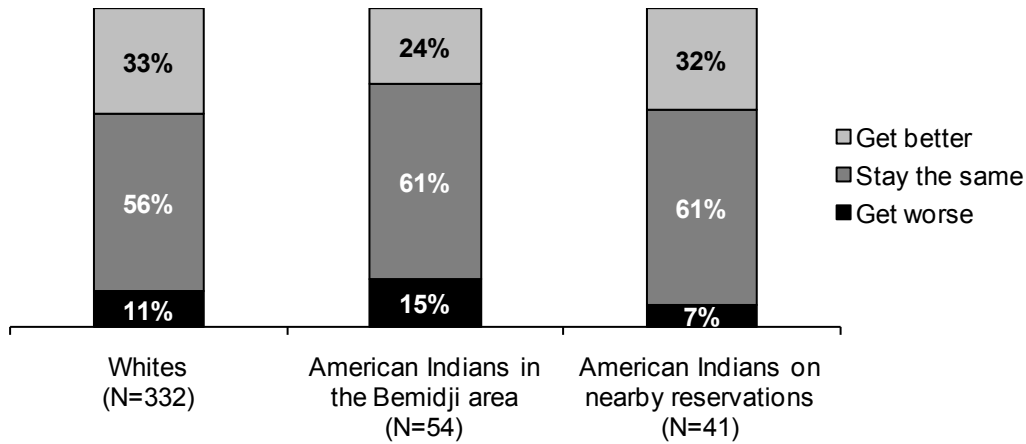
Additionally, a large proportion of respondents from both racial groups indicated that they would like to know more about local American Indian culture and history. See Figure 31.

31. Respondents' views on whether they would like to know more about local American Indian culture and history



Despite respondents' desire to better get to know people of other races and cultures, when asked whether or not race relations in the Bemidji area will improve over the next five years, less than one-third say they think things will get better. Neither American Indians nor Whites appear to be really optimistic. The majority of residents in this study think conditions will stay the same. See Figure 32.

32. Respondents' views on how race relations in the Bemidji area will change over the next 5 years



Study participants were asked to identify the most important areas for addressing discrimination and improving race relations in the community by selecting their three top choices. Possible areas included: housing, employment and income, education, health care, justice and the legal system, civic and social engagement, business community, and other. In only one case did there appear to be a difference in how American Indian and White respondents ranked these areas – about half of American Indian respondents ranked “justice and the legal system” as a priority area, compared to only about one-quarter of White participants.

According to respondents, the four most important places to start working on discrimination and race issues are: education, employment and income, civic and social engagement, and justice and the legal system. See Figure 33 for respondents' ranking of each area.

33. Priority areas for addressing racial discrimination and race relations in the community

Area	Share of all participants who ranked this area in their top 3	Share of all participants who ranked this area as number 1*
Education	54%	30%
Employment and income	53%	17%
Civic and social engagement	33%	13%
Justice and the legal system	29%	12%
Housing	26%	5%
Health care	23%	6%
Business community	23%	3%
Other**	7%	4%

* Not all participants ranked their top picks.

** Other specified areas include: all of the above, religion, personal responsibility, mental health, hunting and fishing rights, and special needs.

Participants' suggestions for next steps

Many study participants shared their ideas on what they think would be the most effective way to improve race relations in the Bemidji area. The following themes emerged from both questionnaire comments and focus group discussions. Participants' ideas for addressing discrimination in these areas are listed below.

Address root causes

Anger about negative stereotypes, disrespectful treatment, perceived economic advantages of others, and drug and alcohol abuse were mentioned by both American Indians and Whites. Participants' suggestions:

- Take a hard look at what is actually causing the “race problem.”
- Educate the whole community on what causes poor race relations.
- Offer supportive housing for people who suffer from homelessness and chemical dependency.

Build relationships with law enforcement

According to American Indian participants, law enforcement is a major area for discrimination. Participants' suggestions for improvement:

- Develop opportunities for law enforcement to have friendly communication with the community.
- Make race relations meetings a mandatory requirement for sheriff and police departments on or near all of our reservation areas.

Educate youth

Many participants felt that it was important to address race issues early on and that working with youth had the most potential for creating real, widespread change. Participants' suggestions:

- Teach cultural diversity classes in elementary schools.
- Educate youth about racism, because racism is a learned behavior that comes from the home environment.

Provide more opportunities for people of different races to interact with one another

An overwhelming majority of study participants indicated a desire to better know people of other cultures and races. Participants' suggestions:

- Make more Native activities or groups open to the public.
- People need to get to know each other on a one-one-one basis to find out that we are really all the same.
- Have everyone work together on issues like homeless shelters.
- Nurture race leaders in the community. Provide a venue for races to discuss problems on a monthly or regular basis.

Secure commitment from local leadership

Only one-half of study participants believe that community leaders are working well together to address diversity issues. Some participants view the absence of people of color in local government positions as a problem. Participants' suggestions:

- Generate more involvement from elected officials and business owners.

- Hire more American Indians in city, county and state positions. Also, hire someone to serve as a liaison between Native groups and the Mayor of Bemidji.

Other focus areas

When commenting on moral values and life outcomes, the role of religion was mentioned by several participants. One person specifically mentioned the strong influence of the Christian church in the community. Another institution that participants mentioned as a force for change was the media. Participants' suggestions:

- Focus on churches and the promotion of justice.
- Include positive coverage of Native Americans in local print media.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that about 30 percent of Bemidji residents (both American Indians and Whites) and 45 percent of American Indians living on nearby reservations are dissatisfied with the current state of race relations in the Bemidji area. In addition, more than 40 percent of respondents in all racial categories feel that improving race relations should be a top priority for the community. Finally, when survey respondents were asked if they would like to "better get to know people from other cultural and racial groups," nine out of ten respondents (both American Indians and Whites) agreed.

These areas of common ground provide a reasonably strong platform from which increased dialogue, improved understanding, and intercultural bridges can be built. The question remains: How should community leaders proceed?

Study participants ranked education, employment and income, social and civic engagement, and justice and the legal system as the most important areas in which to begin the work of building more racial equity in the community. Based on this finding, Shared Vision committee members, who commissioned this study, are planning to focus their efforts on the following, with justice and the legal system as a critical lens applied by each team:

- Education and training
- Economic development and entrepreneurial activity
- Cultural knowledge and understanding
- Leadership and civic engagement

Study results suggest that the four key focus areas identified above are reflective of what Bemidji area residents believe should be top priorities in addressing intolerance, racial discrimination, and other issues related to the experiences of American Indians and Whites in the community. To accomplish this work, the Shared Vision committee and those involved in Bemidji Leads! will build on the high levels of volunteerism reported by respondents.

In order to create widespread community buy-in and support of these efforts, it will be important to continue to build collaborations and partnerships broader than the initial Shared Vision committee. This includes partnerships with tribal leaders and the primarily White leadership in the Bemidji area. By addressing racial conflict on multiple fronts and through multiple partners, it will be possible to accelerate the process of making the Bemidji area a more understanding, accepting, and welcoming place for people of all races to live.

Next steps

Broadcast the message and invite others to join the effort

Many people and organizations will need to be part of this effort if the community is to create real change. Shared Vision will work to create a common understanding of where the community is at right now.

Form teams and develop strategy

As indicated above; there are four areas that will be given priority. Shared Vision will organize teams of Bemidji area residents and leaders who will develop goals and strategies to address each area.

Forge partnerships

The challenges and opportunities presented by this issue are too big and complicated for any one group. Only through collaborative partnerships can the community create change. Shared Vision will work to build, expand, and sustain these relationships.

Drive change

Finally, change will require disciplined, sustained, civic effort. Shared Vision is committed to providing that discipline.

Appendix

Focus group questions

Survey instrument

Focus group questions

INTRODUCTION

Shared Vision is a community project including broad representation from multiple community groups and nearby Indian tribes that was initially formed by Bemidji Area Race Relations Council (BARRC) and Bemidji Leads! The Shared Vision committee is working together to conduct a study about how different groups of people in the Bemidji area feel about race relations and how we can work together to strengthen our community. Wilder Research was hired to conduct this study.

“Race relations” refers to communication and interaction among people of different races, both in formal and informal situations. We are particularly interested in talking with you about racism and racial discrimination against American Indians in Bemidji and surrounding areas, and any ideas you might have for how race relations could be improved.

(Share a little bit about facilitators’ backgrounds)

Ask about recording

Remind everyone to keep conversation private

Questions:

For our first question, we want to ask about your thoughts about what things are generally like between Indians and white people living in the Bemidji area? Do you think there are a lot of problems and conflict, or is it mainly just isolated incidents? Have things gotten better or worse over the past few years?

Next, we are wondering if you can give us some examples of ways that Indians are discriminated against by white people? These can be things that have happened to you personally or things you have heard about from others.

In general, what do you think are the reasons for this type of poor treatment of Indians by white folks? What stereotypes or mistaken beliefs about Indians do you think are held by a lot of white people around here? (If not specifically mentioned, I will ask about things like Indians stealing, alcoholism, gaming, and fishing and hunting treaty rights.)

What about the reverse situation – are there ways that white people have been mistreated or stereotyped by Indians in your area?

What is the overall impact on your community of racism and discrimination? How do you see Indian people struggling, if at all, because of racial discrimination? In what ways, if at all, do Indian people in your community work together to get past the experiences of racism and discrimination?

Now we want to ask you about ways that you think these problems might be reduced or solved altogether. Can you think of anything that could be done, either by a group like the Shared Vision committee, by local government, by schools, by law enforcement, or by all people in the community, that could help to improve the communication and understanding between white people and Indians. Which things have already been tried and failed? Which things do you think have the best chance for success, and why?

Survey instrument

Shared Vision is a community project including broad representation from multiple community groups and nearby Indian tribes that was initially formed by Bemidji Area Race Relations Council (BARRC) and Bemidji Leads! The Shared Vision committee is working together to conduct a study about how different groups of people in the Bemidji area feel about race relations and how we can work together to strengthen our community. "Race relations" refers to communication and interaction among people of different races, both in formal and informal situations. Wilder Research and Bemidji State University have been contracted to conduct this survey.

Your household was randomly selected from among all households in the Bemidji area to participate in this survey. This survey is confidential – your answers will never be connected with your name in any reports. Any household member over age 18 is eligible to complete this survey – only one response per household please. To complete the survey, answer the questions below and return the survey in the enclosed postage-paid return envelope.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Dave Hengel at 218-333-6533 or dhengel@hrdc.org. You can also contact Nicole MartinRogers at Wilder Research at 1-800-328-2972 or nam1@wilder.org.

Thank you for your participation!

SECTION I: Perceptions of Race Relations Today

First, we have just a few questions about your general perceptions of race relations in the Bemidji area. We are looking for your **opinion** – there are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

1. Overall, how would you rate race relations in the Bemidji area?
 - ¹ Very good
 - ² Good
 - ³ Fair
 - ⁴ Poor
 - ⁸ Don't know/No opinion

2. How have race relations in the Bemidji area changed in the last 5 years?
 - ¹ Gotten much better
 - ² Gotten somewhat better
 - ³ Stayed the same
 - ⁴ Gotten somewhat worse
 - ⁵ Gotten much worse
 - ⁸ Don't know/No opinion

3. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion/ Don't know
A. The Bemidji area is a welcoming community to people of all races.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
B. Racial diversity in the Bemidji area is one of our community's strengths.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
C. Community leaders in the Bemidji area work well together in addressing issues of diversity.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
D. Compared to other issues of importance facing our community, race relations rank near the top.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
E. Generations of racism and discrimination make it harder for minority groups to achieve their goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
F. We must honor and uphold hunting, fishing, and gathering rights guaranteed to American Indians by treaties.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
G. I usually speak up when I think someone is making a racist comment or joke.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
H. I would like to get to know people better from other racial and cultural groups.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
I. I believe I have had certain advantages in life because of my race.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
J. I believe people of other races get advantages because of their race.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
K. I would like to know more about local American Indian culture and history.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
L. I participate in situations where I am in the minority.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
M. People of all races have equal opportunity to receive a quality education in our community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
N. People of all races are treated fairly by administration, faculty, and staff in our local educational systems.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
O. People of all races have equal opportunity to apply for and get any job for which they are qualified in our community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
P. In general, people who are poor or unemployed are in that situation because of their own lack of effort.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
Q. Discrimination in the housing market is a problem in our community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
R. Homelessness affects people of all races equally in our community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
S. In general, being stopped by law enforcement is something that happens to people of all races equally in our community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
T. I feel I am listened to by my local government decision makers.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸
U. In general, the process for applying for jobs online is easy to do.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁸

4. Please describe any specific comments you have about any of the above items:

SECTION II: Personal experiences with discrimination and racism

5. Have you volunteered in your community during the past year?

- ¹ Yes
² No

6. Have you ever been asked to serve in a leadership position in your community?

- ¹ Yes
² No

7. Thinking about your own experience, do you believe that you have personally experienced discrimination because of your race or ethnicity during the past year in any of the following situations?

	Never	Once or twice	Several times	On a very regular basis
A. Stores, shopping	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
B. Restaurants, bars, theaters, and other entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
C. Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
D. Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
E. Local media (newspaper, radio, TV)	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
F. Education	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
G. Government services	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
H. Sports	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
I. Community in general	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
J. Health care	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
K. Law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
L. Courts	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴
M. Hunting and fishing rights	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴

8. Please describe any specific comments you have about any of the above items:

SECTION III: About you

Please answer this next set of questions about your characteristics and life circumstances. These questions will be used to help us determine if there are differences in our community based on race/ethnicity, gender, age, and other characteristics. Remember, your responses are confidential.

9. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your life?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not applicable
A. Your present housing.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
B. Your household's income.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
C. Your job or the work you do.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
D. Your education.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
E. Your access to health care.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
F. Your participation in the social life of the community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
G. The education your children are getting.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
H. How well different groups in society get along with each other.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
I. The community you live in.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
J. Your ability to influence local decision makers.	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹

10. What part of the community do you live in?

- ¹ Within Bemidji city limits
- ² Greater Bemidji Area
- ³ Red Lake Reservation (Specify community: _____)
- ⁴ Leech Lake Reservation (Specify township/community: _____)
- ⁵ White Earth Reservation (Specify township/community: _____)
- ⁶ Other, (Specify: _____)

11. What is your age?

- ¹ Under 18
- ² 18-24
- ³ 25-34
- ⁴ 35-44
- ⁵ 45-54
- ⁶ 55-64
- ⁷ 65-74
- ⁸ 75 or older

12. What is your gender?

- ¹ Male
- ² Female

13. Do you generally identify yourself as:

- ¹ American Indian or Alaska Native
(GO TO Q. 14) →→→→→
- ² White or Caucasian
- ³ African American or African Native
- ⁴ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ⁵ Hispanic or Latino
- ⁶ Mixed race
- ⁷ Other, specify: _____

14. If you are American Indian, what Band are you affiliated with?

- ¹ Leech Lake
- ² Red Lake
- ³ White Earth

- ⁴ Other, specify: _____

15. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- ¹ Less high school
- ² High school diploma or GED
- ³ Some college education or training past high school, no degree
- ⁴ Associate degree (2-yr degree)
- ⁵ Bachelor's degree (4-yr degree)
- ⁶ Professional or graduate degree

16. What was your total household income in 2007, from all sources, for all members before taxes?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ¹ Less than \$10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁶ \$35,000 - \$49,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ² \$10,000 - \$14,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁷ \$50,000 - \$74,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ³ \$15,000 - \$19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁸ \$75,000 - \$99,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ⁴ \$20,000 - \$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> ⁹ \$100,000 or above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ⁵ \$25,000 - \$34,999 | |

SECTION IV: Next steps

Please give us your input about the areas we should focus on for the next phases of our project to improve race relations in the Bemidji area. Your advice, as a resident and member of the community, is very valuable to this process.

17. Which of the following areas is the most important place to start addressing discrimination and race relations in our community? Please rank your **top three choices** in terms of importance by marking a (1) next to the most important area, a (2) next to the second most important area, and a (3) next to the third most important area.

- ___ Civic and social engagement
- ___ Education
- ___ Business community
- ___ Employment and income
- ___ Health care
- ___ Housing
- ___ Justice and the legal system
- ___ Other, (Specify: _____)

18. Now that you have had a few minutes to think about race relations, over the next 5 years, do you think that race relations in the Bemidji area will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?

- ¹ Get better
- ² Get worse
- ³ Stay about the same

19. Please share one or two ideas that you think would do the most to improve race relations in the Bemidji area.

Thank you!