



HERE  
COMES



EVERYONE



*Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom*



The Alberta Teachers' Association

# *Genevieve Balogun*

1950–2009

*Her memory makes us smile*



Over the years, Genevieve was recognized for her work promoting multiculturalism and fighting racism. An educator with the Calgary Board of Education for more than 30 years, she was a regular ARA delegate for the Calgary Public Teachers' Local No 38. She served as an Association instructor and was involved with the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPNet) Intercultural Perspectives subcommittee, the ATA's Second Languages and Intercultural Council, and the Alberta Association for Multicultural Education. She was a community liaison for the Terry Fox Family of Schools, and was one of two community leaders designated as Visionaries for the Diversity and Inclusion Initiative of the Calgary Foundation's Forever Funds.

Genevieve's fellow Association instructors describe her as amazing, dedicated, kind, vibrant and jovial—a woman with a huge heart, an infectious smile and a twinkle in her eye that could light up a room. She was a mentor, an encourager, a caregiver, a friend and a colleague. She always spoke with respect about people and ideas. She had a generous spirit. She gave the gift of herself. We have lost a kindred spirit. Her memory makes us smile.

We especially thank her for her enthusiastic guidance in and valuable contribution to the development of this resource.



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ISBN 978-1-897196-84-7  
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Photography: Yuet Chan, Koni Macdonald and Don Hammond  
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# Foreword

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, our school communities continue to reflect the increasing diversity of our society in terms of culture, ethnicity, language, race, colour, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion and other characteristics. To assist teachers in adapting their practice to those school communities, the Association is pleased to publish *Here Comes Everyone*, a resource on teaching in the intercultural classroom.

The publication of this resource supports the association's strategic direction of actively addressing social justice and social cohesion in the interest of healthy families and communities; its strategy of promoting research-based strategies that advance diversity, equity and human rights; and its continuing priority of supporting publication and dissemination of resources related to diversity, equity and human rights.

A product of the Association's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee, *Here Comes Everyone* is organized into six chapters representing the continuum from cultural perspective to intercultural understanding, from Anaïs Nin—"We don't see things as they are—we see them as we are"—to Mahatma Gandhi—"We must become the change we want to see." Chapter 1 explores how cultural identity shapes your thinking and guides your actions; Chapter 2 explores how you can ensure that your classroom and school are inclusive environments; Chapter 3 explores what you can do to identify and address inequity in your classroom; Chapter 4 explores how you can improve your instructional and assessment practices to respond effectively to cultural differences; Chapter 5 explores how you can involve families and communities in fostering intercultural understanding in your school; and Chapter 6 explores how school administrators can further the development of an intercultural perspective within their school and school jurisdiction.

Each chapter contains specific objectives to assist you in progressing along the continuum, as well as activities, stories and additional resources. Particular attention is paid to instructional strategies; assessment practices; and communications skills, including the nuances of language. It is the Association's hope that this resource will assist you in creating a safe, inclusive and caring classroom for every one of your students.

Gordon R Thomas  
Executive Secretary



# Acknowledgements

The Alberta Teachers' Association would like to thank principal writers Andrea Berg, Satinder Dhillon, Juliet Kershaw and Barb Maheu for their work on this document.

The Association would also like to thank the following, who generously provided their expertise and guidance:

- Genevieve Balogun, Mosaic Family Resource Centre
- Karen Bardy, Edmonton Public Schools
- Glen Buchan, Alberta School Boards Association
- Ricardo Carlos, Centre for Race and Culture
- Gloria Chalmers, Edmonton Public Schools
- Dr Miriam Cooley, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
- Dawn Duffy, Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools
- Monica Ellis, Edmonton Public Schools
- Mary Fiakpui, Catholic Social Services
- Mary Frances Fitzgerald, Edmonton Public Schools
- Ruth Gitaka, Catholic Social Services
- Michelle Glavine, Rocky View School Division
- Sean Granger, Red Deer Public School District
- Karen Hobbs, Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities
- Janice Holloway, Calgary Board of Education and Bow Valley College
- Donna Mae Ford, Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative
- Leila Mansour, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
- Delia McCrae, Second Languages and Intercultural Council, Alberta Teachers' Association
- Susan Mercer-Thornhill, Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary
- Paddy Michael, Calgary Board of Education
- John Milford, Rocky View School Division
- Gloria Oberg, Battle River School Division
- Elisa Rawe, Edmonton Public Schools
- Lynn Smarsh, Edmonton Catholic School District

Design and editorial services provided by Association staff.



# Introduction

## Here Comes Everyone

*I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible.*

—Mahatma Gandhi

Alberta's rapidly changing demographics are creating an exciting cultural diversity that is reflected in the province's classrooms, both urban and rural. The new landscape of the school provides one of the best contexts in which to teach young Canadians that strength lies in diversity. To teach this effectively, however, requires an appropriate frame of mind, a broad skill set and a dedicated "heart set." Working the front lines in a school's culturally diverse environment, teachers need to know

- how to prepare for teaching in an intercultural setting,
- how to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to adapt successfully to culturally diverse classrooms, and
- how to teach and communicate effectively with students and their parents, whatever their cultural background.

A diverse classroom environment is rich in possibility for teaching and learning, for both your students and you. Your challenge as a teacher is to capitalize on the energy of today's intercultural classroom mix and lay the groundwork for *all* students to succeed. Celebrating the gifts of diversity benefits everyone.

## The Culture in Interculture

### Defining Culture

Simply put, culture is "The way we do things around here." More elaborately defined, culture is an integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communication, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of social groups (NCCC 2004).

In this guide, *culture* refers to groups or communities that share common experiences that shape the way they see and make sense of the world. These groups may be defined by gender, race, sexual orientation, ideology, nationality, religion, occupation, language and so on.

**Culture is not static.** A person can belong to many cultures simultaneously, and can be born into or adopt a culture. Strangely enough, people often don't clearly recognize aspects of their own culture except when they become evident as strongly held beliefs and well-practised traditions.

**Culture is not hereditary.** It is learned. It is constantly changing as people enter new environments and create new affiliations. Some human traits, such as emotions,



## Terms

**Culture:** integrated patterns of human behaviour that are influenced by social groups. These social groups can be differentiated by gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ideology, nationality, language, religion, occupation and other factors.

**Cultural broker:** someone who liaises between and bridges cultures to help bring about mutual understanding by interpreting and explaining cultural differences

**Cultural perspective:** the way one views issues based on one's cultural background

**Interculture:** between two or more cultures

**Intercultural perspective:** the ability to understand an issue from the viewpoints of multiple cultures

**Intercultural understanding:** a thorough comprehension of the complexities, challenges and benefits inherent in the interactions between two or more cultures

are influenced by culture. For example, love and anger, though not cultural traits in and of themselves, are expressed differently by people of different cultures. In other words, people's cultural environment influences their behaviour.

**Diversity affects culture.** From the diversity within community, uniqueness unfolds—of a school, a neighbourhood community or, in a larger context, a nation. Individual uniqueness is determined by the diversity inherent in a person's life, acquired through both DNA and one's associations. It is diversity that defines us, both as individuals and as a nation.

### Cultural differences

Cultural differences are generally manifested in how we

- approach learning,
- communicate,
- deal with conflict,
- complete tasks,
- make decisions, and
- reveal information about ourselves to others.

### Defining Interculture

*Interculture* refers to the interactions between cultures where each group values the traditions, perspectives and contributions of the others. Through this process of sharing, cultures evolve and change individually and in their collective patterns



of interaction with each other. The goals of interculturalism are to enhance mutual understanding, reduce marginalization and build inclusion.

### **Intercultural skills**

Because educational institutions are microcosms of society (Ghosh and Abdi 2004), culture plays a feature role in schools today. It is essential, therefore, that school staffs be able to

- communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts; and
- use those communication skills in various educational contexts, such as the classroom, school, school district and provincial educational system, and with the Alberta Teachers' Association and other organizations that represent the interests and needs of teachers.

Intercultural skills are developed over time through observation, reflection, learning and practice. Learning and using skills and tools specifically designed to be effective in intercultural settings promotes equity. In your classroom, this will translate to greater social and academic success for your students.

### *The Effects of Cultural Marginalization*

Marginalized students are associated with groups perceived as having little or no value by other groups (Ghosh and Abdi 2004). They usually fall into one of three minority-group categories—ethno/cultural, linguistic or sexual—and have experienced rejection or discrimination based on unequal treatment.

Conversations with students who feel marginalized because of their culture reveal that feelings of isolation, frustration and rejection are common. These feelings can seriously affect a student's self-esteem, academic motivation and achievement and sense of identity.

Newcomer and refugee students are particularly vulnerable to marginalization. Every day in school, in their newly adopted country, newcomer and refugee students can face overwhelming challenges, such as

- trying to be accepted by peers,
- learning a new language,
- acting as an intermediary for family,
- dealing with mental illness caused by trauma and
- trying to understand confusing and sometimes conflicting cultural norms.

Students of other marginalized groups experience similar feelings. They, too, often find it difficult, stressful and frightening to integrate into a new class where they fear being met with hostility. Such heightened emotions can distract students and interfere with their learning.

To successfully integrate students who feel left out, teachers and others responsible for fostering student success in Alberta's educational institutions must develop intercultural perspectives.

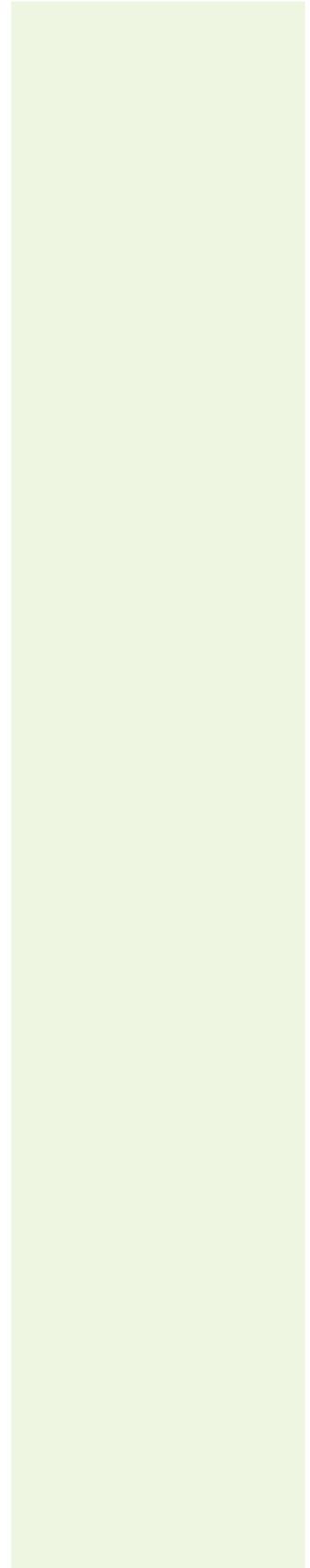


## *The Influence of Cultural Perspective*

Nothing in society is culture free. Cultural perspective shapes one's individual experience, influences one's world view, and determines one's values and how they are manifested in the classroom. Biases and prejudices formed by generalizations and stereotypes based on limited personal experience are easily absorbed. A biased cultural perspective can cause you to make inaccurate assumptions about the intelligence and learning abilities of students. For example, if you believe that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or queer students are insecure with their own identities, you might underestimate their desire and ability to participate confidently in class. If you assume that students from single-parent families receive less academic support at home, you might not expect them to perform as well as students from traditional two-parent families. In other words, you have passed judgment based on preconceived notions. If you form opinions of a culture based only on your experiences with one group of students, your opinions will affect your relations with, attitude toward and expectations of other students you encounter from that cultural group.

The gap in achievement between students from the mainstream culture and those outside of it continues to grow. In classrooms where teachers depend on practices based on and steeped in mainstream culture, students from outside that culture will be left behind. In these classrooms, already-marginalized students are further challenged and often fail, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure.

At its best, the classroom provides equal opportunities for all students. If you recognize the decisive role that a student's culture plays in his or her ability to succeed, you will also recognize the importance of using approaches that take into account the culture of non-mainstream students.



## About This Guide

The Alberta Teachers' Association actively cultivates an interest in teaching methods that have proven effective in intercultural educational settings.

The Association is committed to ensuring that Alberta schools and classrooms are safe, caring and inclusive for all students. *Here Comes Everyone—Teaching in the Intercultural Classroom* is designed to help school staff build and sustain educational practices that honour and reflect intercultural perspectives. It provides practical advice for learning to communicate and interact more effectively with students and their families, wherever they come from, whatever their culture, traditions, ethnicity, language group, race, colour, sexual orientation or religion. The teaching approaches and strategies included in this guide will enhance the unique qualities of an intercultural classroom for the benefit of everyone.

*Here Comes Everyone* is divided into six distinct chapters. We begin with the necessity for introspection: "Understand Yourself" reminds us that to be an effective teacher in a culturally diverse classroom, you need to understand your own cultural identity. The second chapter, "Build Inclusive Classrooms," follows with suggestions for creating inclusive environments in which students feel safe, welcome and cared for. Find out about the effects of power and privilege afforded dominant groups in chapter three, "Confront Inequity and Assumptions." Now that you are ready to take action, study the suggestions provided in chapter four, "Transform Instructional Practices," for ensuring that the classroom environment, curriculum and resource materials are culturally meaningful and relevant for all students. Chapter five, "Engage Families and the Community," looks beyond school boundaries and reinforces the cumulative benefits of liaising effectively with students' families and community members. The final chapter, "Tips for Administrators," provides suggestions specifically designed to assist administrators responsible for creating inclusive school environments.

# 1 Understand Yourself

*How does your cultural identity shape your thinking and guide your actions?*

**To be an effective teacher in a culturally diverse classroom, you first need to know and understand your own cultural identity.**

Culture underlies your view of the world and affects your actions and understanding of everyone around you. It influences your thoughts and behaviour, and sows the seeds of your biases, prejudices and discriminations. Formed over time, your cultural identity is shaped by your gender, race, sexual orientation, ideology, nationality, religion, occupation, language, relationships; that is, it is a composite of life experience.

To understand what influences and motivates your behaviour, reflect on your cultural makeup. Can you identify your own beliefs, attitudes, biases and prejudices? Once you understand what motivates you, you'll begin to understand what motivates others. You will be a more effective teacher when you develop the ability to understand and accept your students' world views—the lens through which they understand and behave in the world. Through self-reflection, you are setting out on the path to intercultural understanding.

You might begin by considering the various influences that affect you in your position as a teacher. You come to the classroom as a person with your own history, as does each of your students. Your classroom reflects you as a person, as well as your values and principles as a teacher. These in turn reflect the community in which the school is located, as well as provincial standards and expectations, educational and otherwise. Much of your cultural identity has to do with your educational affiliations. What experiences and affiliations have shaped your students?

Intercultural understanding is critical if you are to connect effectively with your students. An intercultural perspective enables you to better understand what students value, what they think and how they learn.

*Our own culture provides the lens through which we view the world; the logic by which we order it; the grammar by which it makes sense.*

—Avruch and Black



*We share common experiences that shape the way we understand the world. It includes groups we are born into and groups that we join.*

—DuPraw and Axner

## Objective 1

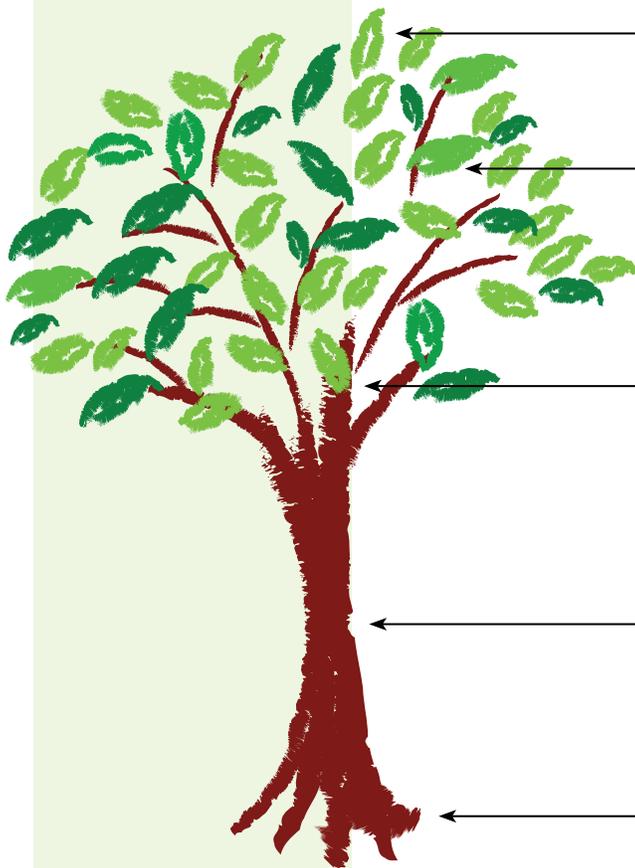
*Acknowledge that cultural self-reflection is a critical starting point in developing an intercultural perspective.*

Recognize that the personal and professional journey of intercultural awareness is ongoing. Greater awareness is achieved only through a continuous cycle of self-reflection, observation and practice.

Explore the influences—your beliefs, attitudes and values—on your cultural identity.

### Exploration 1: Shaping Identity: The Tree of Life

This activity asks you to use a tree as a metaphor for considering the events and experiences that have shaped your identity. The idea for using a tree originally came from Merry Merryfield, an education professor at Ohio State University. In the tree that we have fashioned here, we have supplied the life details of a fictional teacher/vice-principal.



#### 2010s

- Working as vice-principal and social studies teacher at a senior high school in urban Alberta; working part-time writing teacher resources on race relations

#### 2000s

- Took first teaching job at an elementary First Nations band school in rural Alberta
- Travelled through Asia for a year (Nepal, India and Bangladesh), returned to University of Alberta, completed a master's degree in international education policy studies

#### 1990s

- Made a high school exchange trip to China
- Introduced by Bolivian friend to South American culture
- Father lost his government job
- Attended University of Calgary, studied fine arts, transferred to education and undertook an international study program for educators in Ghana

#### 1980s

- Moved to Edmonton, into a multicultural neighbourhood of families from Vietnam, India and Iran
- Took family road trips throughout Canada
- Joined the junior high social justice club

#### 1970s

- Born in Jasper, into an ethnically homogenous neighbourhood where people spoke the same language and came from the same social class
- Family involved in local community projects

Now it is time to make your own tree.

1. Start by asking: If you were a tree, what tree would you be? This question should generate ideas and trigger personal insights.
2. Make a rough sketch of your tree to serve as a graphic organizer. Consider your personal experiences and jot down significant events, starting at the roots and moving up the tree. Think of the roots as early family experiences, beliefs and values; the trunk as childhood growth and development; and the branches as lessons learned from school, work, travel and relationships. Try to remember approximate dates.
3. Use the tree metaphor to reflect on your experiences over a period of time. With a group of people you trust, discuss the events that have shaped who you and they are today. Within the group, ask
  - What did you learn from your family about people who were different from you?
  - What experiences have altered your view of others or your own identity?
  - How did your school experiences develop your perceptions of diversity?



*We don't see things  
as they are—we  
see them as we are.*

—Anaïs Nin

### *Exploration 2: "I am from" Poems*

"I am from" poems ask you to think about the things you remember from growing up that influenced who you are today. Write your own free-verse poem, then have your students do the same. The following poem is an example of this form of self-reflection.

#### **I am from . . .**

I am from the big city, public transit and skyscrapers.  
I am from western Canada, Edmonton Oilers and West Edmonton Mall.  
I am from Saturday afternoons,  
Baseball in the park and ice cream cones.

I am from the middle class,  
A teacher and a salesman.

I am from summer vacations,  
With a station wagon that took us on adventures.

I am from a homogeneous community,  
Where we had to worry what the neighbours would think.

I am from a family of high expectations  
That were drilled into me as a child.  
I am from a world where change was feared,  
We must always keep things the same.

I am from a world of singularity,  
Devoid of exotic spices and unique rhythms.

It was an average beginning,  
But I now know the value of *masala dosa* and a latin salsa number.

### Exploration 3: Considering Difference

**The Question:** Do you believe that diversity in our society raises problems that we must all try to solve, or do you believe that diversity is an asset we should take full advantage of?

Before discussing the question, on the continuum below mark an X to reflect your feelings about diversity.

Diversity raises problems  
that we must all try  
to solve.

Diversity is an asset  
we should take full  
advantage of.



Here are some reasons to consider diversity an asset rather than a problem. What reasons would you add to the list?

- The more you learn about people, the less you fear them or what they stand for.** Learning about people you think of as different challenges preconceived notions and breaks down inappropriate stereotypes. Understanding difference removes the threat and anxiety born of the fear of the unknown. Brain research has demonstrated that feelings of fear, threat or anxiety can create barriers to learning and healthy brain development.
- Acknowledging different world views helps us develop better solutions for complex problems.** Experience is the incubator of creative thinking and innovative ideas. The greater the exposure to contrasting viewpoints, the more fertile the ground for generating new ideas. As schools and society face issues of increasing complexity, diverse approaches to problem solving are essential.





- **Diversity makes a learning community more interesting.**  
Differences can create a healthy tension and sometimes even conflict that enhances creativity and learning. And, yes, life without difference would be dull. Celebrating difference and diversity adds piquancy and enjoyment to life.
- **People who respect diversity can be more self-confident and healthier.**  
According to the writer Pamela Espeland (2003), “Studies have shown that people who get along with different kinds of people are emotionally and physically healthier—and more successful in their careers—than those who don’t.” In other words, when we treat people with respect, they are more likely to reciprocate. Simply put, positive social interactions make us feel better about ourselves and enhance our self-esteem. (Vicki Mather, retired ATA staff officer)

### *Exploration 4: Thinking about Terminology*

The words we say profoundly affect how others understand and respond to us. We need to develop awareness of the nuances of language, as understanding is inextricably tied to context and cultural association. Connotations and associations depend entirely on a person’s life experience.

**Step 1.** In a group or learning team, brainstorm (without judging) all the terms that describe your own culture, race, language and ethnicity, then do the same for your students’ cultures. Use a T-chart to capture your ideas.

**Step 2.** Identify the terms you use to refer to your own cultural group. Which terms do you prefer to use and why?

**Step 3.** Once you have generated the two lists from Steps 1 and 2, discuss the appropriateness of each term and the context in which you would use each one. Then identify the terms you use to describe your students. How would you refer to your Aboriginal students, for example? As natives, Indians, First Nations, Cree, Blackfoot or some other descriptor? How do they and their families refer to themselves? Broaden the discussion to consider terms both respectful and not. In the group setting, ask participants which terms they prefer and why.

#### **Be thoughtful about the words you use to communicate.**

Be conscious of the language you use in general and of the terminology you use specifically when discussing people and issues related to diversity and culture. Find out from your students which words are respectful and which are not. Consider the limitations of labelling groups. It’s easy to fall into the trap of stereotyping or generalizing. Identify racist, sexist, homophobic and other labels that might be considered offensive.

## Objective 2

*Recognize how your personal biases can affect instruction.*



It is seldom easy to identify our own biases. One of the most common biases is related to gender. Some studies indicate that teachers pay little attention to the fact (until someone calls attention to it) that boys get preferential attention. Without realizing it, many teachers contribute to the greater participation of male students by not providing sufficient wait time for all students to respond to questions. More assertive boys will be quicker to respond. But it does not stop there. Educational researcher and professor Janice Wallace (2007) suggests that boys from the dominant culture receive more attention from teachers than do boys from marginal groups. Teachers need to be acutely aware of this. Assessment strategies can also reflect personal bias. Make sure to use test questions and examples that include a variety of genders and cultures.

*The journey toward cultural competence requires the willingness to experience, learn from those experiences and act.*

—Jerome H Hanley

### *Exploration 5: Cultural Competence Checklist: Personal Reflection*

It is important to recognize areas in which we have a limited understanding. Check off the following topics that you would like to learn more about.

I would like to understand how culture affects people's perspectives on

- |                                       |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> education    | <input type="checkbox"/> family roles                       | <input type="checkbox"/> religion             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gender roles | <input type="checkbox"/> customs or superstitions           | <input type="checkbox"/> alternative medicine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> employment   | <input type="checkbox"/> perception of time                 | <input type="checkbox"/> wellness             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> value of Western medical treatment |   |

I would like to know how culture affects child-rearing practices related to

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> discipline       | <input type="checkbox"/> dressing                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> toileting        | <input type="checkbox"/> feeding                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> self-help skills | <input type="checkbox"/> expectations for the future |

I would like to learn how my students' cultural norms influence communication in terms of

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> eye contact                        | <input type="checkbox"/> interpersonal space | <input type="checkbox"/> use of gestures        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> comfort with silence               | <input type="checkbox"/> turn taking         | <input type="checkbox"/> topics of conversation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> greetings                          | <input type="checkbox"/> interrupting        | <input type="checkbox"/> use of humour          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> asking and responding to questions |  |   |

I would like to learn more about how culture affects

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> parent-teacher relationships  | <input type="checkbox"/> reporting and assessing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> student-teacher relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> student participation in class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> homework expectations         | <input type="checkbox"/> appropriate content knowledge  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> learning styles               | <input type="checkbox"/> student discipline             |

Use this checklist to guide the development of your intercultural skills. For more assistance, contact organizations such as the Centre for Race and Culture ([www.cfrac.com](http://www.cfrac.com)), which focuses on education, skills development, research and social change to foster social harmony and cultural inclusion. The Centre offers an antiracism workshop series for community leaders, educators, human resource professionals, employers and social service providers. A list of other organizations appears in Appendix B.

## Objective 3

### *Engage in courageous conversations.*

A **courageous conversation** (Singleton and Linton 2006) utilizes “the agreements, conditions and compass to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race in order to examine schooling and improve student achievement. Courageous conversations engage those who won’t talk, keep the conversation going, even when it gets uncomfortable, and deepen the conversation so that it leads to authentic understanding.” (p 16) Courageous conversations enable school staffs to question their assumptions and beliefs and how they affect teaching practice.

#### **Address educational inequities by conducting intercultural dialogues.**

As the internationally acclaimed writer, speaker and authority on leadership Margaret Wheatley (2009) wrote: “[The use of intercultural dialogues] is the most ancient and easiest way to cultivate the conditions for change—personal change, community and organizational change, planetary change. If we can sit together and talk about what’s important to us, we begin to come alive. We share what we see, what we feel and we listen to what others see and feel.” (p 7)





*Like an iceberg,  
that part of culture  
that is visible is only  
a small part of a  
much bigger whole.*

—Jerome H Hanley

**Recognize that your school or community may have a code of silence** when it comes to discussing issues related to race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Teachers might be reluctant or afraid to share their stories or opinions. They may find it difficult to speak personal truths if they suspect they'll be judged or put on the defensive. Therefore, unless a sense of trust is firmly entrenched, deep conversations can backfire. It's worth initiating such conversations, though, because deep conversations can reveal solutions. Be willing to experience discomfort without disengaging, because it's through dissonance that change occurs. And even if change does not come immediately, conversation can plant the seed for further thinking.

**Be specific in naming types of difference, and avoid couching your language in vague ideas of diversity, culture and multiculturalism.** Talk about racism, homophobia, sexism, classism and so on. Instead of saying, for instance, "Our school is becoming more and more diverse," say, "We're noticing an annual increase in students from the Sudan and Somalia." Instead of saying, "The teaching population doesn't reflect the diversity of our students," say, "All of our teachers are white, while 82 per cent of our students are First Nations and Métis."

**Engage in conversations that encourage you to question your assumptions about students, such as**

- Asian students are better at math
- Girls can't do math
- Single parents don't have time to participate in school activities
- Limited English skills are related to intelligence
- Students living in poverty struggle academically
- Advanced placement classes are too difficult for First Nations students
- Gay students are unaffected by curriculum that never mentions same-sex parented families

## 2 Build Inclusive Classrooms

*How can you ensure that your classroom and school are places where all students feel they belong?*

Teachers are responsible for creating inclusive environments in which students feel safe, welcome and cared for.

It is a natural human need to want to belong and to have attachments to others. When we belong, we feel valued, protected and cared for. The sense of belonging that occurs in families and in close communities is duplicated among students in school settings. Because students thrive in environments of safety and inclusion, we want to ensure that *all* students feel included in their classrooms and schools.

Students who come from cultures that differ significantly from the mainstream culture need the security of an inclusive, caring school. It is up to you to create this environment, facilitate positive interactions and deal constructively with conflicts.

When students feel they belong in a school, and they trust their teachers and peers even when their basic philosophies, perspectives and values differ, controversial topics can be safely discussed and problems resolved. Without that sense of trust, students struggle socially, emotionally and academically. The classroom is the place to ward off the struggles that can so easily lead to disengagement, poor attendance or dropping out of school.

When students feel they belong, they will be more likely to contribute their perspectives in class. From such contributions, all students stand to gain. Invaluable lessons on resiliency, global experiences, economic disparities, and ethnic and religious customs provide greater depth to classroom learning. A classroom's cultural capital increases when students feel comfortable and accepted at school.

And all of this, of course, conforms to official ATA beliefs that all children have the right to be taught in an inclusive environment that is safe and caring, respects diversity and the rights of persons, and provides equitable opportunities for success.

*Inclusive education is about embracing all, making a commitment to do whatever it takes to provide each student in the community—and each citizen in a democracy—an inalienable right to belong, not to be excluded. Inclusion assumes that living and learning together is a better way that benefits everyone, not just children who are labelled as having a difference.*

—Falvey, Givner and Kimm

## Objective 1

*Be related,  
somehow, to  
everyone you know.*

—Ella Deloria

*To nurture a sense of belonging in your students, get to know them and help them get to know each other.*

Learn your students' names and backgrounds. Learn to pronounce their names correctly and resist the urge to shorten or anglicize names that are unfamiliar. Start the year by playing name games, so that students learn each other's names.

### Activities

#### Ball-Toss Name Game

Have students practise saying everyone's name, then have them stand in a circle (or two) and give each group a ball. Students toss the ball to someone across the circle and say that person's name while the ball is in the air. Add more balls to the circle as the game progresses.



#### Sharing Stories

Share personal stories, pictures and artifacts. Ask students to bring in an object that represents something about them and to explain the object and their connection to it. Model this activity by sharing something that lets students know something about you.

- **Contact parents or caregivers early in the year.** In whatever form you use to communicate with them, focus on finding out about their child's strengths and abilities.
- **Research and initiate trust-building activities.** Trust-building activities can serve as good kinesthetic experiences and help break the ice with the class. These types of tactile activities (see the examples on the next page) help build comfort among the students in an atmosphere of fun.

## Your Name Is Important

Khalid, a child from an Arabic family, had attended our school since Grade 1. While he'd been a student with us, his behaviour had presented us with challenges. Early in the school year, when Khalid was starting Grade 5, he was involved in an incident that required me to call his mother and have her come in to meet with her son and me. I was a new principal at the time. As the three of us sat uncomfortably in my office, it was clear that Khalid's mother was very anxious about the meeting, and her demeanour indicated she was taking a defensive stance. I began by asking Khalid to explain the incident, then followed by inviting his mother to comment. I noticed she pronounced his name very differently than we did. Since he had started at our school, everyone had pronounced the boy's name Ka-leed. However, in referring to her son, Khalid's mother said Ha-lid (with emphasis on the *Ha*). Noticing the discrepancy, I addressed it immediately. Khalid, however, said, "It's okay, everyone calls me that"—the typical response of a young child anxious to fit in with his peers. I responded, "It's not okay. Please help me to say your name properly. Your name is important."

I picked up the relieved look on his mother's face. She actually broke into a broad smile. "See," she said to him. She looked me directly in the eye and said, "Thank you. No one has ever said his name correctly." I assured her that not only would I always call him Ha'-lid, but I would make sure that all teachers and staff did the same.

That encounter made a significant impression on Khalid's mother. She began to check in with the school regularly to give feedback, ask for advice and generally work on building a good relationship with the school—something she'd not done before. Gradually teachers and students learned to pronounce her son's name correctly, and he learned that he was entitled to have his name pronounced correctly.

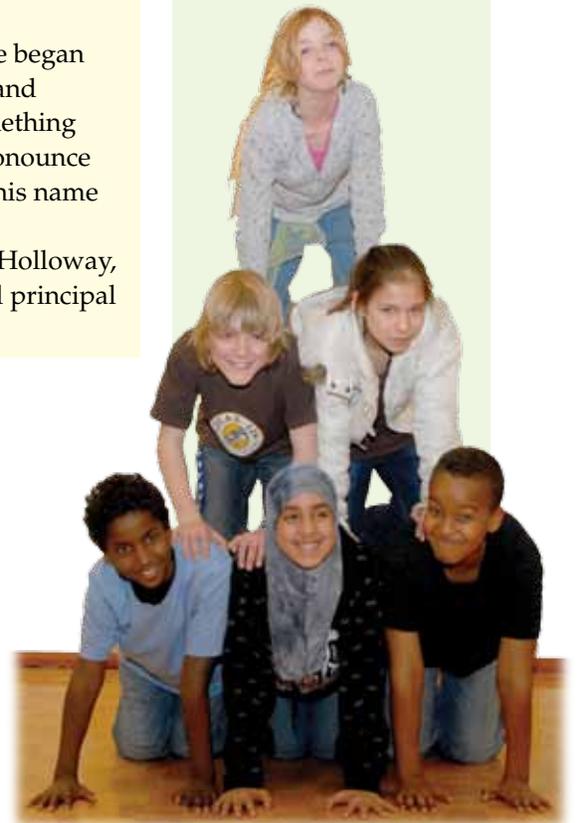
Janice Holloway,  
retired teacher and principal

## Activities

### BALANCING EXERCISES

#### Human Spring

Students partner up and face each other, about 50 centimetres apart, with their palms facing each other at chest level. Partners lean forward simultaneously allowing their hands to meet in the middle. They then push off each other so they spring back to their original upright position without losing their balance. Trying a few more times, students can slowly increase the distance between each other. As an extra challenge, they can try the exercise using only one arm or standing on one leg.



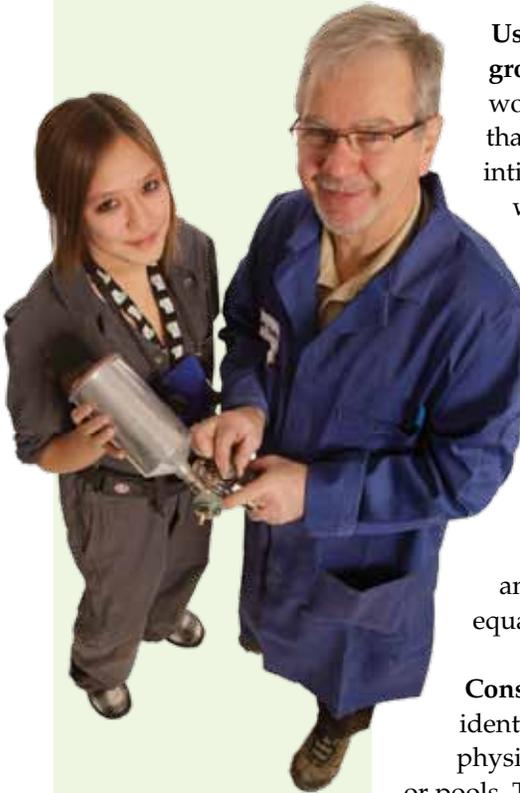
## The Supporting Link

Ask students to stand side by side, in pairs. They link their inside arms and put their inside feet together. Simultaneously, they lean to opposite sides, finding and maintaining a balance. Try this with students facing each other with hands and toes together, then leaning backwards.

Your drama teacher can probably give you ideas for more trust-building activities.

## Objective 2

*Use teaching strategies and resources that reflect students' cultures.*



**Use heterogeneous groupings for learning activities and change groupings frequently.** Communicate the expectation that students will work with everyone in the class throughout the year. Use teaching strategies that require face-to-face dialogue. Keep in mind, however, that it can be intimidating for students who lack English language skills to be grouped with those who are fluent. Grouping students in carefully selected pairs may work best.

**Recognize that students may express themselves nonverbally.** Avoid interpreting silence as apathy or lack of ability or interest. Many people like to have time to think before they talk, while others think by talking. Use nonverbal responses yourself to show that you understand and relate to this form of communication. Allow more time for students who are less confident speakers to form and articulate their thoughts. Provide opportunities for these students to express themselves more clearly. Know that misunderstandings can arise, and students may sense a challenge to their ingrained notions of fairness, equality and justice when none was intended.

**Consider some gender-neutral accommodations.** Some students do not identify with their perceived gender or may be self-conscious or shy about a physical handicap; such students might be uncomfortable using washrooms or pools. Think about discreetly making accommodations for these students' use of washrooms and swimming pools.

**Without singling students out, provide opportunities for them to share their cultural values, experiences and practices.** Don't put students on the spot by asking them in front of peers if they would mind talking about such things. Make either a general or private request to share such matters. If a student is reluctant, don't force the issue.

Ensure that displays and resources reflect the cultures of your students. Purchase appropriate library resources and use Internet resources that show a diversity of people, cultures and perspectives.

Seize teachable moments—opportunities that spontaneously present themselves as perfect times to engage students—to build on the experiences of students in the classroom.

## Objective 3

*As a staff, work together to make the school welcoming for all students.*

During staff discussions, share successful strategies to address challenging situations. Set aside time in staff meetings to share stories and photos of students who need extra attention from all school staff.

Provide orientation for students new to the school. One effective approach to orientation is to train former new students to provide grade-appropriate orientations. Make it an expectation that students who went through the orientation themselves will help others later on. They will be in the best position to know what the new students' fears, anxieties and questions might be. For culturally diverse student populations, develop guides in students' languages of origin.

## Objective 4

*Be a positive role model.*

One of the most effective ways to establish an inclusive, respectful climate inside or outside the classroom is to be a positive role model. Students learn acceptable behaviour by observing the adults around them. A good way to reflect on your own behaviour is to ask yourself what students are learning from your responses to their behaviour.



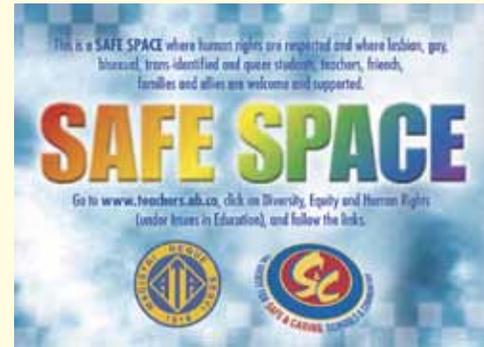


*Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.*

—James Baldwin

*Establish safe spaces in the school for students who may be on the fringes of mainstream culture.*

Consider establishing gay–straight student alliances, prayer rooms for religious minorities or diversity clubs. For example, you could provide a place for Muslim students to spend time when they are fasting during the month of Ramadan. This overcomes the difficulty of having them watch other students eat lunch when they can't. Acknowledging and supporting the needs of students outside mainstream culture validates their difference and shows a sensitivity that will help them enjoy school.



*New Moves: Orientation for Newcomer Students*  
([newmoves.ca](http://newmoves.ca))

New Moves provides an orientation video in 18 different languages for newcomer students. The video features 14 students talking about their adjustment to school in Canada and what helped them succeed. The students speak about the differences in behaviour expectations and teaching methods, and in communicating with teachers and other students. Their voices are complemented by the comments of school administrators and dynamic images of life in Canadian schools.

*The 18-minute DVD was produced by Frameline Productions, with funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.*

# 3 Confront Inequity and Assumptions

*What can you do to identify and address inequity in the classroom?*

To address social inequities in school, you must first understand existing inequities and recognize the impact they have on student learning and achievement.

Power differentials exist in Canadian society and in schools, too. To address inequity in the classroom, teachers need to be aware of the practices and resources that afford more power and privilege to the dominant groups.

Underlying structures and practices in education reinforce systemic inequities that often go unquestioned. While cultural diversity is sometimes apparent through obvious racial, gender or language characteristics, it is also sometimes invisible, as is the case with sexual orientation or religion. Recognizing multiple perspectives is critical to understanding the invisible forces that shape the decisions we make. The unexamined assumption, word or gesture is based on instilled personal and cultural bias and can often reinforce disparity among students.



Students from Keshotu Academy perform at City Hall in Edmonton. Keshotu is Swahili for “our future.” The Keshotu Leadership Academy is a performing arts and leadership development program for African-Canadian youth.

*People who are born on third base and think they hit a triple.*

—Jesse Jackson

—his description of people born into a life of privilege who don’t realize how easy they have had it

## *Why Is My Country Red?— An “Aha” Moment*

Many years ago, I had an exchange with a student in class that gave me pause to think about how we label and categorize others without ever challenging such assumptions.

I taught in a semirural high school with few visible minority students. When asked if I would accept an exchange student from Jamaica into my Grade 11 social studies class, I was pleased to do so. The English-speaking girl was an able, personable student, though she seldom volunteered a comment.



We were studying global issues and I was pointing out various places on a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) map, colour coded to indicate three levels of economic development in the world. Canada, the United States, Europe and Australia were purple and labelled “developed countries”; the countries at the next level of development were represented by red and labelled “developing countries.” As I pointed this out, the Jamaican girl’s hand shot up. “Why is Jamaica in red? It’s not a developing country,” she announced.

I was at a loss for words. Many thoughts raced through my mind, mainly those that would deny her declaration. I really didn’t have an answer for her that day, but I did begin to think about what the map presented and represented to students. Why were economic indicators the only criteria used to distinguish the “development” of countries? What message did the students get when this map remained in class with its unchallenged coding system? How would I respond when challenged in future? Most important, I wondered how new or non-Canadians viewed our depictions of them. How could I challenge myths and misconceptions in my classroom and avoid overgeneralizing?

—Barb Maheu  
retired teacher and ATA executive staff officer, Professional Development

Editor’s note: Since this article was written, CIDA has revised its world map and uses the Human Development Index to classify countries as determined by the United Nations Development Program. Go to <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics> for more information.

## Equality and Equity Do Not Mean the Same Thing

**Equality:** Where there is equality, everyone is treated in the same way regardless of differences.

**Equity:** Where there is equity, all students' needs are met in ways that ensure they can achieve the same learning goals based on their learning needs. Equity is fairness.

### Example

Inequality exists if the only way to get into a school building is by using steps. In this case, students in wheelchairs are at a disadvantage because they can't enter the building. To ensure equity in this situation, everyone must be able to access the school, so we provide a ramp to give those in wheelchairs equal access. Another example of inequality occurs when a school acknowledges only some students' religious practices (holidays, time for prayer, etc). Equity can be achieved by making individual accommodations that respect different religious holidays.



Diversity can also accentuate power struggles. Children whose cultural orientation resonates with the dominant culture are far more likely to succeed in school and life than those whose cultural mores, traditions, beliefs and modes of expression do not. Mainstream teachers, though they do so unintentionally, tend to provide learning experiences that are generally more relevant to students from the mainstream culture, thereby maintaining inherent inequities. Classroom practices that value competition over cooperation, prefer straightforward to roundabout communication, favour hierarchy over egalitarianism, or individualism instead of collectivism provide an advantage to students whose behaviour conforms to the dominant norms of Western culture.

To address inequities, schools must acknowledge and address the effect of mainstream institutions, policies and pedagogies on students.

## Objective 1

*To develop mutually trusting and respectful relationships with your students.*

Power and privilege in the classroom rest in your hands by virtue of your authority as the teacher. This power can interfere with your developing trusting relationships with your students. To establish trust do the following:

**Consider whether you treat groups differently based on stereotypical assumptions.** Do you have different expectations of boys and girls, of First Nations and other students, or of students based on their socioeconomic backgrounds? Do you require that homework be done using computers at home? Do you assume that all parents can read the language of instruction and are able to help with homework? Do you require students to complete projects that necessitate the purchase of extra school supplies? Do you assume that your students live in traditional families?

**Be conscious of your physical presence.** Is it always effective to stand while students are sitting? If you stand, you are the focus of their attention and are taking an assertive stance. Sometimes it's more effective to be with your students by taking their position—sitting or standing amongst them.

## Objective 2

*Determine how power and privilege function in your school and in your classroom.*

Look conscientiously for explanations for inequities; don't deny that schools can be places where inequities exist. In your professional learning groups, examine classroom procedures and school policies and procedures to identify supports and barriers to equity. Understand that the system may need adjusting if it is to serve all students.

### *Activity: The Fish*

(For a schoolwide teacher meeting or inservice)  
On a wall, place one fish cutout for each child in the school. Put a student's name on each cutout.



Ask teachers to put a checkmark beside the name of each child with whom they had a positive interaction within the previous month.

Once the teachers have finished, the number of checkmarks on each fish will clearly indicate which children are not experiencing positive interactions with the adults in the school and will reveal whether or not there are any common characteristics among those students (for example, race, ability, etc).

**Provide leadership opportunities for all students.** Go back to the data and determine whether or not students from all cultures emerge as leaders in your class and offer tutoring or coaching.

**Affirm contributions of cultural minorities.** Continually affirm the contributions of cultural minorities—you don't need an officially sanctioned day to do so. Choose role models from marginalized groups and incorporate their achievements into regular classroom discussions. Celebrate and acknowledge such events as Black History Month, National Day Against Homophobia and National Aboriginal Day.

## *Objective 3*

*Be aware of obvious and hidden manifestations of culture.*

**Avoid the rhetoric of shame and blame.** Rather than thinking of students as being at risk or disadvantaged, seek alternative explanations for perceived failure. Reframe your thinking to consider your students' cultural backgrounds in terms of strengths or assets. Make yourself aware of the invisible aspects of their culture as well as the outward signs. In addition to appreciating a culture's food, festivals and fashions, learn the culture's communication styles, role expectations, and family and community structures.



*What is important about people is what is different, not what is the same.*

—Roland Barth

**Avoid power struggles with students over cultural issues.** Students may be required to conform to certain religious practices regarding dress, they may not be allowed to participate in certain physical activities or they may need to miss school for reasons related to their cultural beliefs. By finding other acceptable activities for them and respecting their need to live in two cultures, you send a message to all students about the importance of respect and acceptance.

## Objective 4

*Recognize that students are equal as human beings, but not equal in their needs.*

**Reject the myth of “colour blindness”** (“I don’t see difference, I see children”). While it’s tempting to treat all children in the same way and to deny the existence of difference, you may be fostering inequities among students. It’s important to consider the effect of difference on the educational decisions you make, on your expectations of students’ abilities and behaviours, and on your pedagogical choices. Students can unintentionally be made to feel marginalized when their race, religion, income, gender or sexual orientation is ignored or given token consideration or, on the contrary, excessively highlighted.

**Acknowledge students’ different needs.** Students are acutely aware of practices they perceive to be unfair. Help students understand the difference between equity and equality, which sometimes means that you don’t treat all students the same.

**Follow up classroom discussions by reading stories about resiliency, especially those involving marginalized students.** Stories of hope can inspire students. Believe that students who beat the odds are not just anomalies; positive influences from outside make the difference. Often, a key factor in student resiliency is the student’s relationship with a caring adult.

**Welcome, value and understand alternative viewpoints on controversial issues related to diversity.** Ensure that the teaching strategies you use don’t polarize. Formal debates, for example, can have this effect; instead, use talking circles, small groups, brainstorming and storytelling.

**Avoid excessive highlighting of difference.** Students usually want to fit in. Drawing attention to difference can make students uncomfortable. While it’s important to be aware of difference, it should not be a constant source of attention.

**Don’t assume that a student from a minority culture or other non-mainstream background speaks for his or her entire cultural group.** Encourage students to express their views as individuals and don’t ask them to make broad generalizations, which may or may not be valid, about their group.

# 4 Transform Instructional Practices

*How can you improve your instructional and assessment practices to respond effectively to cultural differences?*

As a culturally responsive teacher, you will be constantly looking for creative ways to make the curriculum relevant for all your students.

*You cannot put the same shoe on every foot.*

—Publilius Syrus

## Objective 1

*Build on students' knowledge in their language of origin.*

Allowing students to maintain their language of origin dramatically improves their language acquisition and academic success. Researchers (López Estrada, Gómez and Ruiz-Escalante 2009) tell us: "Literacy-based abilities are interdependent across languages in such a way that knowledge and skills acquired in one language are potentially available in the other." Schools with dual-language programs that enable students to do their academic work in their language of origin find that the students' success is dramatically increased. Contrary to a commonly held belief, oral fluency in a new language does not necessarily ensure academic success. It has been assumed that full immersion into the dominant language is the best approach to helping English (or French) language learners succeed in school. In fact, students may sacrifice subject content while they learn to master the language. Dual-language programs exemplify enrichment or additive approaches and see other languages as assets rather than hindrances to academic success.



*The highest level of differentiation is knowing about students' cultural capital. Their ethnicity, race, gender, socio-economic status and language(s) are more critical than second-order differentiation, which is based on learning styles and preferences.*

—Jill Blackmore, PhD

## *Is That All You Want Me to Do?*

Several years ago, when I was the assistant principal at an urban inner city school, I observed our Grade 6 math teacher working with a new student, who was not very proficient in English, struggle with a math problem. He appeared quite confused and even despondent. Then the teacher paired him with another student who spoke Urdu, his native language. That student explained the concept and very quickly the new student exclaimed, "Is that all you want me to do?" He was clearly pleased with his ability to solve the problem; in fact, he turned out to be gifted in math.

When the classroom environment, the curriculum and resource materials are culturally meaningful and relevant for all students, they all have a better chance of succeeding academically and socially.

The story of the Urdu-speaking student who turned out to be a math whiz illustrates the benefit of allowing students to help each other in their native language. The teacher recognized the value of capitalizing on the knowledge students brought to the classroom from their countries of origin, which in turn affirmed their past educational experiences. It is not uncommon for students who are focused on learning English to fall behind in learning cognitive concepts. When this is the case, it's even more difficult for them to maintain the level of academic success similar to their English- or French-speaking peers.

Janice Holloway,  
retired teacher and principal

You can be confident in the knowledge that the pedagogies deemed most appropriate for culturally diverse minorities will work effectively with all students. You will also find that cultivating your ability to be flexible and responsive in the classroom helps you implement the instructional practices that address cultural differences.

To create and maintain inclusive learning environments, instructional and assessment practices must be continually re-examined. To see the world as your students see it—through their cultural lens—is the first step.

## Objective 2

*Make instruction and assessment more meaningful and relevant by learning about your students' cultures, languages and learning styles.*

Both culture and individual variation are important elements in a student's learning.

**Analyze student performance and achievement data for trends.** Examine the data based on criteria such as race, ethnicity and gender. If differences appear in achievement, try to find out why. Analyze results through the lens of your own teaching and assessment practices rather than assuming that the results are a reflection of students' cultural differences. Try this: examine data that lists students who are coded as gifted or special needs. Disaggregate the data into categories of gender, ethnicity, race and so on. Ask if all groups are represented equally; if not, why not? Again look through the lens of your own instruction and assessment practices.

Tap into your students' lives and experiences. Some students come from troubling circumstances and might have lived through trauma. If they are comfortable talking about it, you may find out how trauma has affected their lives and be better able to help them learn. Ask them about their experiences, history and family situation and how they think any of these things affect their learning. Find out what they aspire to. Build bridges between a student's prior knowledge and experiences and new academic material. Differentiate your instruction, taking culture into consideration.

### *Instructional Practices*

1. Ensure culturally congruent science education by including explanations of natural phenomena from indigenous perspectives.
2. In social studies, take a multiple-perspectives approach that considers events from various points of view.
3. Point out that mathematical knowledge has its roots in various cultures, both past and present.
4. Draw on the numerous cultures across Canada and the world for activities related to sports, music, art and drama.
5. Supplement factual information with narratives involving people to appeal to girls, who are often more engaged by story. This is easy to do when studying history or language arts. How can you do this in other subjects? What pedagogies appeal to boys?



**Consider ways to differentiate instruction based on culture and diversity.** The more you know about learning styles and cultural orientations, the greater your opportunity to provide different learning experiences and assessments that take culture into consideration. Consider giving students the choice of completing assessments either in writing or orally, or working on projects either individually or in a group. Test students to find out how they learn best (not how you teach best). Many tools exist for determining information about learning styles. Tests that identify multiple intelligences, interests, abilities and other attributes can be extremely helpful in differentiating instruction.



**Carefully tailor your instruction methods for First Nations students to suit their learning style.** Traditionally, First Nations people learn best by observing rather than listening to verbal instruction. If you find this is so with your First Nations students, make sure you show them exemplars and samples, and provide demonstrations. Michelle Ranger, a Métis teacher, reminds her First Nations and Métis students, “Creator gave you two eyes, two ears and one mouth for a reason. You should watch and listen twice as much as you speak.” Be consistent and transparent in your assessments of learning and with assignments. When possible, involve students in establishing criteria for assessment. Look for culturally based ways to accommodate gifted and other special needs students.

### *Instructional Practices*

- Allow students to demonstrate learning in ways they are comfortable with. Students from cultures with strong oral traditions may be able to show what they’ve learned by talking about it rather than writing about it. Allow students with strengths in drawing or illustrating to communicate their knowledge using these skills instead of completing multiple-choice questions.
- Adapt assessments so that learning outcomes can be demonstrated in a variety of ways. Develop rubrics that are logical, consistent and fair, and provide them at the beginning of an assignment.
- Provide service-learning opportunities for students. Be aware of conferences, symposiums and events that focus on special interests, student leadership or social justice issues. Alberta has various organizations that involve youth through action and action research. The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights, and Change for Children are just a few.

## Objective 3

*Welcome all students' experiences—not just those from the culturally dominant group—by including resources and activities that relate to the lives of all students.*

When students see themselves in curriculum, resources, displays, lessons and assessments, they are far more likely to internalize learning, understand its relevancy and do better assessments.

**Represent students and those like them in a positive light in curricular resources.**

Refer to role models such as writers, historians, poets, scientists and athletes, and ensure that displays, pictures and videos show successful adults from all cultures. Take time to critically evaluate classroom and library resources for cultural biases or omission. This activity provides a good focus for staff or professional learning-group discussion. Establish criteria for inclusion and assess resources based on your criteria. Check to make sure the resource uses respectful unbiased language and correctly names groups. Avoid tokenism and patronizing books. Think about the students' perspectives and/or ask them what appeals to them in a book. Find out how they relate best to stories and other forms of text or media.

**Assemble resources that reflect a variety of cultural perspectives.** Avoid selecting only a single item (story, poem, picture) that provides token acknowledgement of cultural significance. For example, when choosing books, make sure you include those that feature students from nontraditional family structures: blended, single parent and same-sex parents. Use culturally relevant visuals, and auditory and graphic organizers such as music, posters and videos that reflect diversity.

**When planning ethnocultural celebrations such as Heritage Days or Aboriginal Days, first ask these questions, then plan the events around the answers:** Who is the intended audience of the event? Whose needs will the event serve? What will students learn when they participate in or organize the event? Although celebrating cultural events has value on its own, celebrations are most meaningful if you integrate cultural relevance into the daily curriculum. Aim to instill in your students the sense that cultural events are part of a person's daily life, not just celebrations or special days.

**Integrate cultural diversity issues and concepts into curriculum.** Stay current with world events and include newsworthy events of interest to students in daily discussions. For example, you might mention changes to gay rights legislation, highlight important international elections and key world events, or note environmental innovation in developing countries.

**Use holistic approaches to learning.** Many cultures, particularly those of the First Nations, tend to process information globally rather than analytically. First Nations students tend to need to see the big picture at the outset of a project or assignment



because they don't achieve outcomes by following the typical linear, cumulative, step-by-step approach. To accommodate such learning styles, show samples of finished work, establish essential questions and introduce basic concepts early in the teaching of new material.

## *Objective 4*

### *Use engaging teaching and learning practices.*

Conversation and reflection are key elements of learning. Choosing activities that require interaction with others is the best way to ensure that students are learning.

**Use cooperative, experiential, participatory learning activities such as jigsaws, inside–outside circles, carousels and world cafés.** To help students learn to work with each other, think about how to group and seat students in your class. Form random groupings to facilitate students mixing with each other. Use card sorts or puzzle pieces or more structured approaches to organizing groups; for example, if students are struggling with English, they will learn better when working with peers who are sensitive to their learning needs.

**Create international partnerships with schools.** Technology is readily available to facilitate partnerships with classrooms in other countries. Alberta Education has recently published *A Guide to International School Partnerships* (2008), and the Alberta Teachers' Association offers a workshop entitled *Beyond Good Intentions: Partnering with Schools in Developing Countries*.

**Use technology-based strategies to engage students.** Know your school's policies on social networking and help students learn online prudence. Make available to students software programs that teach language and academic concepts.

**Provide student mentorship opportunities in class and school.** Talk to other teachers who also teach your subject to find students who may be interested in becoming mentors. When students from different grades come together, those with greater English language proficiency can help the others improve their language skills.

**Recognize and take advantage of opportunities to facilitate conversations when teachable moments occur spontaneously.** A teachable moment may arise through conflicts relating to culture, or when a student makes an important observation or shares an insight.

## *Objective 5*

*Have high expectations of all students.*

Students are quick to pick up on nuances. If they think you have low expectations of them, they will not try to do better than expected. If, on the other hand, they know you have high expectations, they will usually work hard to meet them. Demand success. Let them know they can achieve it and provide every opportunity for them to succeed.

**Revisit school policies that penalize students who might need more time or require special accommodations.** Consider implementing no-zero policies, and always encourage completion and success.

**Celebrate student success.** Even small accomplishments are worth acknowledging. Making a positive phone call home or having a hot chocolate break with your students are simple ways to celebrate achievements.

*We must become  
the change we  
want to see.*

—Mahatma Gandhi



# 5 Engage Families and the Community

*Students whose parents are involved are more likely to take personal responsibility for their learning.*

—Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems and Doan Holbein

*How can you involve families and communities in fostering intercultural understanding in the school?*

For schools to ensure equitable access to learning for all students, teachers must find ways to liaise effectively with students' families and community members.

When families are involved with their children's schools, the learning experience is enriched for all students.

For schools to ensure equitable access to learning for all students, teachers must find ways to liaise with the students' families and community members. Schools—through policy, procedure and action—are in a position to model the celebration of diversity.



Many students who are marginalized because they are not part of mainstream culture lead double lives. For example, a newcomer student may be required to work at a family business to help support the family; a gay student may be out at school but not at home; a Muslim student may follow traditional practices at home but be less likely to do so at school. These students live in two distinct worlds. By engaging with families and the community, you can learn about your students' lives outside school. With this knowledge, you can better interact with the students and help them integrate into the school environment.

Schools can't educate the whole child—it truly does take a village. Culturally responsive schools don't view the school and community as separate entities; rather, they attempt to minimize boundaries and work with the community. When families from diverse backgrounds share their cultural knowledge, life experiences and unique global perspectives with the school, students learn valuable lessons. If you tap into the wisdom of a community, you will learn how to design and implement lessons and assessments appropriate to a student's home culture. Your teaching will become more culturally relevant.



Cultural acceptance grows through shared communication and cooperation. With mutual trust, school and community can work together to mediate and manage conflict, and to reduce the effects of marginalization.

## Objective 1

*Believe that all families and community members want their children to succeed.*

Be careful of assumptions you make about parents' values. Sometimes cultural differences can be interpreted as evidence that parents don't care about their children's future. Assume that parents' motivations are positive, even if they express them in a way that does not seem positive. For example, some parents might think that their children should have a part-time job because they see this as a way to teach familial responsibility. Some parents might leave discipline up to the teacher; this shows that they respect and trust the authority of the teacher's position. Sometimes, parents want their child to miss school for a religious event because, to them, this is a highly valued component of the child's total education.

To interact effectively with all students, be aware of what prompts your response to cultural difference and work to overcome preconceptions that interfere with genuine and useful communication.

**Get to know students' families** by establishing trusting, caring relationships with students, their parents and the community. Try to understand the complexities in your students' lives. Consider inviting parents into the classroom to help them get

to know you and the school. Their presence in the classroom also helps you to get to know and understand your students' families or caregivers. Ask parents to tell their stories and share their experiences, hopes and fears. Listen carefully to what they say.

**Set up learning activities that require and encourage students to share stories with their families.** Stories can be those that were studied in class or ones that are suitable for reading to younger siblings. Some schools purchase backpacks for students and stuff them with books that can travel back and forth from home to school and be passed on to other students later. Consider sending home wordless picture books when English is not easily read or understood.

### *Getting-to-Know-You Activity: What's in a Name?*

One way to identify the important people in students' lives outside of school is to do this getting-to-know-you activity.

- Give each student a blank piece of 8" x 11" card-stock paper and a felt pen.
- Ask students to write their first name in the middle of the paper and put a circle around it. Around the edges of the circle have them write the names that other people call them (that they would share in public). These can be nicknames, family names, etc.
- Ask students to draw lines connecting the name in the centre to the surrounding names. On the lines, they write the name of the person who calls them that name (for example, Kiddo → best friend). After the cards are made, ask students to circulate around the room with their name card and pair up. In their pairs, each student selects one name from his or her paper and explains the relationship with the person and the origin of the nickname. They continue to circulate until they have shared their names with several others.
- Debrief by discussing the ideas of identity and relationships. Ask students to fold the card in the centre to create a tent and write their name on the outside. The students display the card on their desk for the first few days of school. Collect and keep the cards to learn about the people who are important in your students' lives.



## *Objective 2*

*Provide a welcoming environment for families and the community.*

**Provide school orientation programs for parents.** Some districts establish welcoming centres for newcomer families and provide parent resource centres. Recruit translators to help at these events.

Offer bilingual language programs and bring in educational cultural brokers to assist. Identify and hire a cultural resource person to serve as a home-and-school liaison.

**Try to make contact with each student's family early in the term.** Phone to introduce yourself to parents within the first few weeks of school. Make sure the first contact with parents or caregivers is positive. When parents don't speak English, ask the child how best to communicate with them, or try to connect with interpreters or cultural brokers in education. Educational cultural brokers are trained to bridge and liaise between cultures. They help bring about mutual understanding by interpreting and explaining cultural differences.

**Encourage relaxed two-way communication between yourself and parents.** Find ways to ensure that parents feel comfortable contacting you and vice versa. Frame problems by clarifying your common goal—to ensure student success. Listen without interruption and wait until the parent has spoken. In some cultures interrupting is not acceptable, although it is common in mainstream Canadian conversation. Learn to wait.

**Maintain a class website** (if all students have Internet access) or develop a family bulletin board or journal to which families contribute pictures.

**Consider modifying the Meet the Teacher evening to ensure that all cultural groups feel welcome and can participate.** Do this by inviting parents in ways that they understand. Offer to provide transportation, food, child care and translators, if possible. Don't assume that traditional methods such as school newsletters, usually written in English or French, will be read or understood.

**Recognize the value that some cultures place on oral traditions and collective experiences.** Use talking circles to ensure that all voices are heard. Use translators when necessary.

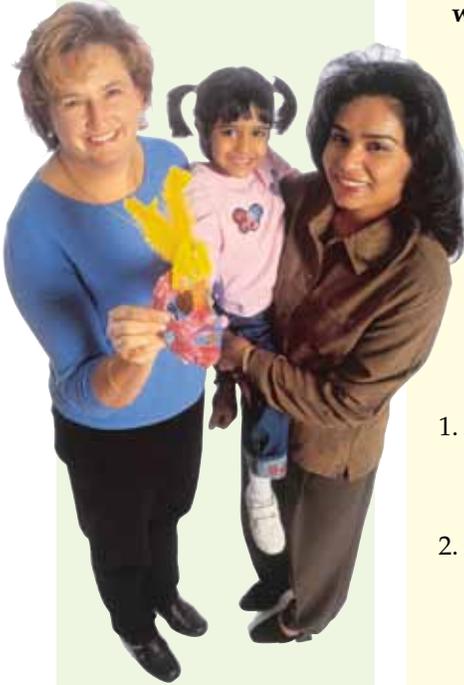
**Host conversational evenings for parents.** As an example, Terry Fox School in Calgary has an interesting approach to learning about the families of its many immigrant and refugee children. Read on to learn more.

### Sharing Culture

Michelle Ranger, a teacher who works with First Nations and Métis students, puts her desk with all of her supplies and books in the middle of the room. She tells her students that if they need anything, they are free to borrow it. This can save students embarrassment if they don't have the supplies they need to complete assignments. In this way she models sharing and generosity, values that are inherent in the students' traditional cultures—her desk is everyone's desk.



Martha Campiou teaches about Cree culture using handmade dolls.



### *Activity: Learn about Your Families*

#### **Terry Fox Junior High School, Calgary: One School's Approach to Connecting with Parents and Caregivers**

The student population at Calgary's Terry Fox Junior High School is a mix of ethnicities, cultures and religions. One of the school's goals is to develop its cultural perspectives. Each year the school hosts a day-long session for parents, students and teachers to exchange ideas. In one section of the program, parents are invited to share their experiences in a panel discussion to help teachers understand the factors that have shaped their lives.

Parents on a panel are asked questions like these:

1. Is your life in Calgary very different from your life in the country where you lived before? Please tell us a story about some of the differences that are important to you.
2. What is different about the schools here? What is the same?
  - a. What do you think the school should do for your children? Do you expect both your sons and daughters to do well at school?
  - b. In your country, what is the relationship between the students and the teacher? Do you think it is different here? Do you like the way the teachers behave with your children? Are there some things you do not understand about what the teachers do or say?
  - c. Do you understand what the teacher asks your children to do? Do you want help understanding this?
  - d. Do you know how to get the information you need to help your children learn at home and at school?
  - e. Do you want the school to let your children do their religious practices at school?
3. Do your children understand the teacher's words and accent? What are the difficulties?
4. Are your children taking special English classes? Would you like your children to take extra English lessons?
5. What advice would you give to help us work with parents and students from your community?

## Objective 3

*Capitalize on the benefits of diversity that families and the community can contribute to the school.*

**Think of families and the community as valuable resources.** Invite parents or caregivers to speak to a class about their area of expertise, interests or culture. Families may be able to share stories of resiliency and of their experiences with prejudice that could provide critical learning opportunities for all students. Community elders carry the benefit of wisdom that everyone can learn from. Invite elders to appreciation teas, sharing circles and assemblies, and to serve as family resource coordinators at the school.

**Recruit bilingual or bicultural parents to help shape professional development experiences for parents and teachers.** Invite parents to classes to experience the learning environment first-hand so that they will be able to explain to other parents the school's routines, expectations and academic curriculum. Encourage your colleagues to teach parents some fundamental literacy skills and concepts. Listen to parents when they express their needs. Seek funding support for initiatives to help parents engage more meaningfully with their children's education.

**Learn cultural protocols from elders or community leaders.** Showing respect for traditions and incorporating them into class activities demonstrates cultural respect. Inviting elders and community leaders to attend functions, observe or lead celebrations, or teach some lessons models respectful behaviour. Be sure to learn the correct protocols when asking elders to work with staff or students.

**Acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of family units: single-parent, same-sex, biracial, bicultural, blended, extended, foster and traditional (nuclear).** Though it can sometimes be difficult for teachers to connect with students' primary caregivers—for instance, when students are being raised in group homes or institutions—it's important to make the effort to establish that connection in all situations. Consider alternatives to traditional Mother's Day, Father's Day and Valentine's Day. Think of ways to make these events more inclusive.



## *Transition Centre Supports Immigrant and Refugee Students*

In collaboration with community partners, the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) plans to establish a K–12 transition centre for immigrant and refugee

students in September 2010. The centre will provide a place to welcome newcomer students and ensure that their needs are met. Support will be provided to help the students adjust to life in Canada and succeed academically. Students, parents, EPSB staff and community members confirmed the need for a designated centre to help immigrant and refugee students who have significant gaps in their English language skills, require health and social supports, and need a basic understanding of Canadian society and the education system. These students are particularly vulnerable because their needs extend beyond learning to other facets of their lives. The transition centre will have year-round intake and serve as a hub for educational, health and social supports for students and families. Designed to help students make the

transition to a regular school program, the centre will provide intense, short-term support, for up to a maximum of one-and-a-half years.



### *Activity: Talking Circle*

Talking circles help people share meaningful personal stories and ideas in a group setting. When used with parents, talking circles help teachers understand parental expectations and concerns. Talking circles have been used extensively by First Nations in Canada but are not exclusive to them.

In a talking circle, a group of people sits in a circle so that each person can see all others. An object (one that is meaningful to the group or topic) is passed around the circle. Only the person holding the object can speak. This ensures that everyone gets to talk without interruption. The facilitator can emphasize the importance of listening, voice, gestures and expressions in telling a story or sharing ideas.

#### **Protocols for talking circles**

People are free to respond as long as they

- address the question or topic, not others' comments,
- speak one person at a time,
- pass the meaningful object without speaking,
- use nonjudgmental language and
- know the protocol for directing the sharing (usually clockwise).

## Objective 4

### *Link families to community resources.*

**Use community resources and personnel to supplement or shape lessons for students and professional development experiences for teachers.** See Appendix A for suggestions.

**Cosponsor after-school and summer programs with community partners.** Begin a student-support club that provides a safe place for students to meet and socialize with one another—a place where they can discuss their feelings and experiences as members of a cultural minority. Gay–straight alliances (GSAs) are student-run and teacher-supported school-based groups that work to create safe, caring and inclusive spaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students and their allies in schools. Contact the Alberta Teachers’ Association for a handbook on how to create GSAs in your school. Camp fyrefly, which is sponsored by the University of Alberta’s Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services ([www.ismss.ualberta.ca](http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca)), is a national leadership summer retreat for LGBTQ youth. It is designed to help youth develop the leadership skills and resiliency they will need to change negative attitudes towards LGBTQ students in their schools, families and communities.



**Invite and include elders or mentors with different cultural backgrounds when appropriate. Learn appropriate protocols for such visits.** The Metis Family Calgary Services Society ([www.mcfs.ca](http://www.mcfs.ca)) facilitates an elder–youth program designed to nurture elder–youth relationships through meaningful activities. Alternatively, invite youth social workers from the same cultural background as students; they will know how to create safe environments where students can share their experiences and feelings.

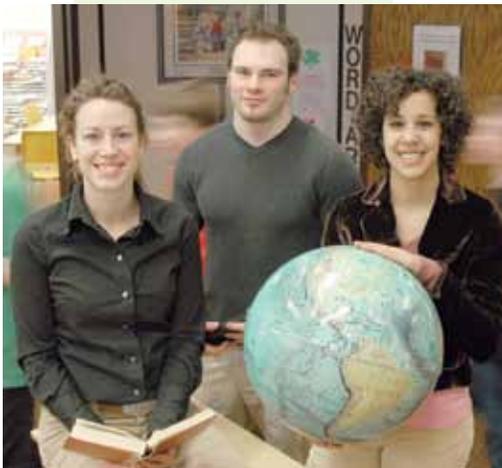
*A principal has to be a spiritual leader. We have to help people recapture the meaning of the work, and we have to talk about the things that touch their hearts.*

—Bolman and Deal

## 6 Tips for Administrators: Promote Intercultural Perspectives

*What can the school administrator do to further the development of an intercultural perspective within the school and its jurisdiction?*

The school administrator is responsible for encouraging and supporting efforts to ensure equal opportunity for all students. As diversity increasingly becomes the norm in classrooms, the administrator is the lead support for teachers as they develop the skills and tools necessary for changing student demographics.



A positive attitude to diversity sets the stage for staff to develop the perspective necessary to teach effectively in culturally diverse classrooms. Administrators can promote diversity as an asset and encourage teachers to take advantage of the teaching opportunities diversity presents. They can provide staff with opportunities to integrate activities that integrate cultural perspectives into the curriculum. When administrators and staff promote and model the advantages of diversity, all students benefit.

Schools are microcosms of the diversity of Canadian society. Schools are also the front line for instilling in young and impressionable students an appreciation of cultural difference. School administrators who acknowledge the intercultural imperative in Canadian society recognize the significant role teachers play in ensuring equity and equality, both in the classroom and in the community.

The culturally perceptive teacher recognizes the power of culture to reduce marginalization. Teachers who see the world through an intercultural lens and who develop the skills to teach through the focus of this lens will improve student academic achievement and create accepting and safe classrooms where diversity is seen as an advantage.

## Tips

Use these tips to help your teaching staff develop and practise an intercultural perspective.

**Review your school's mission statement to ensure that it addresses diversity and inclusion and that your school policies and procedures are based on the principles of equity and equality.** Examine current district and school policies to ensure that your students and staff are protected from discriminatory practices. The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities (SACSC) has developed a Diversity Toolkit that provides suggestions for revising or developing policies to increase appreciation for cultural diversity through curricular and extracurricular programs ([www.sacsc.ca/Diversity\\_Education.htm](http://www.sacsc.ca/Diversity_Education.htm)). SACSC has also developed a booklet series entitled *Respecting Diversity*.

**Determine how power and privilege function in your school and in your classroom.** Look conscientiously for explanations for inequities; don't deny that certain aspects of the school system might not be equitable and might need to be adjusted. Examine school policies and procedures to identify supports and barriers to equity. Engage staff in conversations about potentially divisive issues.

**Hire teachers whose backgrounds are similar to those of your students and encourage the district to mandate inclusive hiring practices to ensure that teachers come from diverse backgrounds.** A staff complement with teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds is living testimony that people of various cultures can work as professionals in schools and act as mentors for students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Make professional development activities related to diversity, equity and human rights a priority.** Encourage staff to participate in diversity, equity and human rights workshops or courses, and give them the necessary time and financial support to do so. The Alberta Teachers' Association offers several workshops related to respecting diversity. Visit [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca), scroll down to Professional Development and click on Workshops and Presentations for more information.

**Be receptive to staff-generated ideas for activities related to diversity.** Be open to the unconventional and help your teachers actualize their ideas for a more inclusive learning environment for all students. Support teachers who are willing to take risks.

**Establish time and space for open and honest discussions of cultural difference.** Make activities promoting diversity a regular item for discussion at staff meetings. Instituting the matter in this way signals its relevance and significance and keeps it on the staff agenda. Time allotted at meetings encourages staff to exchange



information and flesh out ideas for projects involving the whole school. The school administrator is key to setting the tone for such discussions.

**Provide orientation for parents and students.** Parents will appreciate an introduction to the school system, school policies and expectations. Provide tip sheets. Introduce yourself and make an effort to meet personally with parents. Ask students who were once new to the school themselves to provide orientation for new students, whose fears, anxieties and questions they can anticipate. For students and parents whose first language is not English, develop guides to the school in their languages of origin.

**Research and share communities' cultural resources with staff and parents.** Make connections with students' cultural communities outside school. Invite community members to share their cultural knowledge, life experiences and unique global perspectives with school staff and students. Facilitate inservices for parents and family support groups, and provide interpreters if necessary. Contact community agencies for contact information. (See Appendix B for a list of resources.)

**Establish safe spaces in the school for students who might be on the fringes of mainstream culture.** Acknowledging and supporting the needs of students outside mainstream culture validates their difference and shows a sensitivity that will help them enjoy school.

**Participate in social and professional networking opportunities with people from diverse backgrounds.** Because we tend to spend time with those who share our cultural perspective, when we're given the choice we gravitate to those people we already know. In a professional setting, make it a priority to invite, encourage and meet with people who aren't in your usual professional groups, then work together on a task that is beneficial for all.

**Brainstorm ways to get funding and other support for marginalized groups.** The Alberta Teachers' Association offers Inclusive School grants of up to \$2,000 for school projects designed to address diversity. To download an application form, go to [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca), scroll down to Issues in Education, and click on Diversity, Equity & Human Rights, Grants.

**Subscribe to *Just in Time*, the newsletter of the ATA's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee.** This award-winning free e-newsletter is published twice a year. To see back issues, go to the ATA website ([www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca)), scroll down to Issues in Education and click on Diversity, Equity & Human Rights. (Note that the ATA website will undergo a design change in 2010; if you do not find the webpage following these instructions, simply do a search.)





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# Appendix A

## ATA Resources

The ATA's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights webpage is an online resource that answers questions about human rights and diversity issues, posts information and links, and gives teachers ideas on how to build inclusive school communities in Alberta. To access the webpage, go to [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca), scroll down to Issues in Education and click on Diversity, Equity & Human Rights. (Note that the ATA website will undergo a design change in 2010; if you do not find the webpage following these instructions, simply do a search.)

### Major Topics of Focus Related to Diversity, Equity and Human Rights

- Aboriginal education
- Antiracism
- Building inclusive school communities
- Gender equity
- Human rights
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Social justice issues
- UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet)

### Respect for Diversity Workshops

These ATA workshops are available for school staffs at a cost of \$100 per day. Please see the ATA website for further booking information.

- Beyond Good Intentions: Partnering with Schools in Developing Countries
- Building Human Rights Communities
- Building Inclusive Schools—Focus on Racism, Sexism or Homophobia
- Here Comes Everyone: Responding to Cultural Diversity in Alberta Schools
- Respecting All Faiths in Alberta Schools
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity workshop series
- Our Circle and Beyond—Becoming Global Citizens

Note: Some of these workshops are offered by ATA partners.



# Appendix B

## Agencies and Resources

### Calgary

#### **Calgary Immigrant Women's Association** [www.ciwa-online.com](http://www.ciwa-online.com)

Calgary Immigrant women's Association (CIWA) provides essential services to immigrant women and their families, including assistance with settlement, employment, childcare, language training and family services.

#### **Calgary Outlink** [www.calgaryoutlink.ca](http://www.calgaryoutlink.ca)

Formerly known as the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Association (GLCSA), Calgary Outlink provides support, education and resources to the LGBTTIQ communities of Calgary and surrounding area. Calgary Outlink has a drop-in centre and lending library, and provides in-person and telephone peer support.

#### **Centre for Newcomers** [www.centrefornewcomers.ca](http://www.centrefornewcomers.ca)

Based on the model of the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, the Centre for Newcomers works in partnership with newcomer communities to provide opportunities for newcomers to adjust, succeed and contribute as citizens in Canada, and works in partnership with Calgary communities to affirm and value diversity. The Centre offers a wide variety of programs, including assistance with settlement, employment and English language learning.

#### **Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary** [www.isccalgary.ca](http://www.isccalgary.ca)

The Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary is made up of representatives from government, funders, immigrant agencies, public institutions and ethnocultural/multicultural centres, all working with the goal of the timely and equitable integration of newcomers into the community. Its projects have included those that focus on equitable employment opportunities for newcomers to Calgary.

#### **Immigrant Services Calgary** [www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca](http://www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca)

Immigrant Services Calgary provides a variety of services to support the settlement and integration of

newcomers to Calgary. Its Mosaic Family Resource Centre works with immigrant and refugee families to support them in becoming active participants in the community; it provides health advice, literacy programs, counselling services and other resources for families, students and people of all ages.

#### **Metis Calgary Family Services Society** [www.mcfs.ca](http://www.mcfs.ca)

The website provides links to a wide variety of programs and services, oriented mainly toward serving Calgary's Aboriginal population. Resources include housing assistance, cultural and recreational programs for all ages, and early childhood education programs.

### Edmonton

#### **Canadian Native Friendship Centre** [www.newcnfc.org](http://www.newcnfc.org)

The centre is committed to improving social, economic and educational opportunities for Edmonton's Aboriginal population. Services include referrals for employment, health, housing and social services; the centre also provides cultural and recreational programming.

#### **Catholic Social Services** [www.catholicocialservices.ab.ca](http://www.catholicocialservices.ab.ca)

This Edmonton-based organization provides services in communities in central and northeastern Alberta as well as in Edmonton. Its programs include Aboriginal resources; immigration and settlement services; children, family and community services; and substance abuse and corrections services.

#### **Centre for Race and Culture** [www.cfrac.com](http://www.cfrac.com)

Formerly known as the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR), the goals of the Centre for Race and Culture are to eliminate racism, racial discrimination and racially motivated violence in northern Alberta through research and the provision of education and programs for adults and teens of all backgrounds.

### **Edmonton Immigrant Services Association** [www.eisa-edmonton.org](http://www.eisa-edmonton.org)

EISA and its volunteers and staff provide services to immigrants and refugees to help them adapt and fully integrate in Canadian society, to promote cross-cultural understanding, and to bridge cultural gaps through multiculturalism and antiracism initiatives. It works with various immigrant communities, other service organizations and funding agencies to provide programs and services that are responsive, accessible and affordable to all newcomers.

### **Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers** [www.emcn.ca](http://www.emcn.ca)

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) is a community agency that helps immigrants and refugees coming to the Edmonton area to achieve full participation in the community and contribute their experiences and skills to strengthen and enrich the lives of all Canadians. The centre provides a wide range of programs and services that include English as a second language (ESL), employment services, settlement counselling, personal counselling, community development and community economic development, advocacy, and education.

### **Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS)** [www.ismss.ualberta.ca](http://www.ismss.ualberta.ca)

Housed in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, iSMSS is an interdisciplinary hub for scholarly work in sexual-minority studies. Its mission is to enhance possibilities for groundbreaking research, policy development, education, community outreach and service provision focused on sexual minorities and their issues and concerns. A major initiative is Camp fYrefly, a summer camp for sexual-minority youth and young adults ([www.fyrefly.ualberta.ca](http://www.fyrefly.ualberta.ca)).

### **Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative** [www.mchb.org](http://www.mchb.org)

The Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative supports immigrant and refugee individuals and families in attaining optimum health. It provides education, interpretation and cultural assistance, and helps with access to health services and connections to community groups and cultural agencies.

## *Fort McMurray*

### **Athabasca Tribal Council** <http://atc97.org>

The Athabasca Tribal Council represents the interests of five First Nations of northeastern Alberta. Its programs have

included education, economic development, health, and employment and training, all in cooperation with local and government entities.

### **YMCA of Wood Buffalo—** [www.ymca.woodbuffalo.org](http://www.ymca.woodbuffalo.org)

The YMCA of Wood Buffalo offers services to the entire community, including newcomers. Visit [www.ymca.woodbuffalo.org/community-programs/immigrant-services.php](http://www.ymca.woodbuffalo.org/community-programs/immigrant-services.php) for more information about programs and services.

## *Grande Prairie*

### **Grande Prairie Friendship Centre** [www.cityofgp.com/commgrp/commprofile/Friendship+Centre.htm](http://www.cityofgp.com/commgrp/commprofile/Friendship+Centre.htm)

The Grande Prairie Friendship Centre wishes to bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Its programs include a First Nations, Métis and Inuit education project; Aboriginal health liaison workers; employment services; health services for infants; and programs for children and youth.

### **Grande Prairie Regional College Immigrant Settlement Services** [www.gprc.ab.ca/community/iss](http://www.gprc.ab.ca/community/iss)

Settlement assistance provided to newcomers to Grande Prairie and region includes help with government applications; counselling and guidance; resources including telephone, computer, printer and Internet access; citizenship classes; public education and awareness; and an in-school settlement program for students and their families.

## *Lethbridge*

### **Aboriginal Council of Lethbridge** [www.acleth.com](http://www.acleth.com)

The Aboriginal Council of Lethbridge is a coalition of organizations and individuals with a focus on social inclusion and community development. Many of its programs have a broad range of clientele, but all are motivated by the objective of providing community support for the Aboriginal people of Lethbridge and surrounding regions.

### **Lethbridge Family Services** [www.lethbridge-family-services.com](http://www.lethbridge-family-services.com)

Lethbridge family Services provides settlement support services for newcomers to Canada, as well as family support services, counselling and senior support programs for the community at large.



### **Opokaa'sin Early Intervention Society** [www.opokaasin.org](http://www.opokaasin.org)

This organization is a joint effort of various First Nations partners to support families by providing early intervention and family preservation programs. The website provides links to service organizations in Lethbridge and district.

### *Medicine Hat*

#### **Miywasin Centre** [www.miywasin.ab.ca](http://www.miywasin.ab.ca)

The centre offers services to the Métis and First Nations population of Medicine Hat and the surrounding region. Programs include counselling, youth development, programming for elders, referrals to employment services and cultural programming.

#### **Saamis Immigrant Services Association** [www.saamisimmigration.ca](http://www.saamisimmigration.ca)

Saamis Immigrant Services provides assistance to newcomers and the community at large. Programs include language instruction, translation and interpretation services, citizenship classes, literacy, parenting skills, and fitness and recreation. Saamis also offers a series of orientation sessions in partnership with other community agencies.

### *Red Deer*

#### **Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association** [www.caiwa.ca](http://www.caiwa.ca)

Headquartered in Red Deer, Alberta, this organization was initiated in 1991 by a group of immigrant women, with the goal of raising the level of awareness of immigrant women and their families in all aspects of Canadian life, and to assist them in achieving their full potential as members of Canadian society. Many of the centre's programs focus on health and wellness and skill development.

#### **Family Services of Central Alberta** [www.fsca.ca](http://www.fsca.ca)

This is a nonprofit organization that serves 16 communities in central Alberta with programs for families at all stages from prenatal to senior care. A list of partner organizations is available at [www.fsca.ca/CommunityPartners.php](http://www.fsca.ca/CommunityPartners.php).

### *Provincewide Agencies*

#### **Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies** [www.aaisa.ca](http://www.aaisa.ca)

The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) was incorporated in 1987 as an umbrella organization of immigrant-serving agencies in Alberta. AAISA comprises 20 member agencies from 8 communities across Alberta, with more than 1,000 staff that serve more than 100,000 immigrants and refugees annually. AAISA's mission is to assist its member agencies to address the needs of immigrants, the agencies that serve them and the larger community that welcomes them.

#### **Alberta Council for Global Cooperation** [www.acgc.ca](http://www.acgc.ca)

The Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC) is a coalition of voluntary sector organizations located in Alberta, working locally and globally to achieve sustainable human development. The Council's goal is to support the work of its members through networking, leadership, information sharing, training and coordination, and the Council represents its members' interests when they are dealing with government and others. The Council's objectives include promoting and mobilizing greater Alberta participation in assisting international development by facilitating effective member networking and capacity building, both internationally and domestically.

#### **Alberta Network of Immigrant Women** [www.aniw.org](http://www.aniw.org)

The Alberta Network of Immigrant Women (ANIW) is a provincially-based network of immigrant women's organizations that researches issues that affect the settlement process of immigrant and visible minority women, follows through with the recommendations made in the findings, and undertakes projects to build stronger communities and full participation of immigrant and visible minority women in the economic, political and social fabric of Alberta.

#### **Native Counselling Services of Alberta** [www.ncsa.ca](http://www.ncsa.ca)

Founded to provide courtworker assistance to Aboriginal people, Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) soon expanded its services to include family and community wellness programming, legal education, national health campaigns, and community-based research. The provincial overview page, [www.ncsa.ca/online/?page\\_id=78](http://www.ncsa.ca/online/?page_id=78), includes a list of NCSA

programs and a map of Alberta indicating communities with NCSA presence.

### Safe and Caring Schools and Communities [www.sacsc.ca](http://www.sacsc.ca)

This is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to violence prevention and character education for children and youth. The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities (SACSC) has developed many programs, resources and workshops to help adults create safe spaces for youth.

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Many Alberta communities provide additional resources, such as food banks and family services associations. Check the yellow pages of the local or regional telephone directory for “Social Service Organizations.” Organizations such as **Big Brothers/Big Sisters** ([www.bbbsc.ca](http://www.bbbsc.ca)) offer services specifically for children and youth. Go to [www.sharealittlemagic.ca/sharealittlemagic/agencies.asp?ab](http://www.sharealittlemagic.ca/sharealittlemagic/agencies.asp?ab) for a list of Alberta Big Brothers/Big Sisters agencies.

Schools in Alberta frequently offer outreach programs for immigrant families. Several Alberta high schools also have SAGAs—straight and gay alliances—which provide support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth and promote respect for diversity in all its variety.

## National Agencies and Resources

### Diversity in the Workplace [www.diversityintheworkplace.ca](http://www.diversityintheworkplace.ca)

This is an omnibus website—a compilation of links to diversity-oriented websites, including those of governments, human rights organizations, immigrant services agencies and employment services across all of Canada.

### Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) [www.pflagcanada.ca](http://www.pflagcanada.ca)

PFLAG Canada is a national organization that helps all Canadians who are struggling with issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. PFLAG Canada supports, educates and provides resources to parents, families, friends and colleagues with questions or concerns, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To locate a local chapter in Alberta, enter your postal code as indicated in the Contact Us tab at the top of the home page.

### Pier 21—Canada’s Immigration Museum [www.pier21.ca](http://www.pier21.ca)

Pier 21 celebrates the Canadian immigration experience by honouring the unique stories of immigration throughout history. Among its programs is “Community Presents,” which encourages cultural groups to create their own exhibitions and tell their own stories, while celebrating themes related to immigration, cultural diversity, cultural heritage and identity ([www.pier21.ca/programs-and-events](http://www.pier21.ca/programs-and-events)).





ISBN 978-1-897196-84-7

MON-3 2011 09