

Defining Diversity

Diversity refers to the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Source:
Ontario Trillium Foundation

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Trillium Project Advances Inclusion in Developmental Services

By Ilaneet Goren, Diversity Specialist

Two years ago on May 21st, coinciding with International Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, Community Living Toronto and Developmental Services Toronto (dsto) launched a project aiming to improve the cultural inclusivity of developmental services through research, education, and outreach. The project was generously funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, with dsto support. Now, thanks to the tremendous collaboration of our sector and community partners, we are proud to share with you some of our key achievements:

Research

- ◆ Focus groups with staff in the Developmental Services Ontario Toronto Region (DSO-TR) helped uncover the strengths, challenges and needs relating to addressing diversity.
- ◆ Review of relevant literature highlighted the barriers to services experienced by immigrant caregivers supporting loved ones with an intellectual disability.
- ◆ Interviews with immigrant parents and caregivers about their experiences around cultural inclusivity when applying for Adult Developmental Services illuminated the real-life experiences of this underserved population.

Partnerships

- ◆ Collaboration with ANNISAA, an organization promoting social and economic opportunities for Muslim women in Canada, resulted in a joint Open House

event at the Victoria Park Hub, and our participation in the World Hijab Day Celebration where we connected with many families in the Muslim community who had questions about what is available for children with special needs and where to find services. *Continues on page 2...*

The Project in Numbers

- 4,400+** estimated number of people who received information about intellectual disability and access to developmental services
- 170+** hours contributed by volunteers from CultureLink and Community Living Toronto
- 160+** developmental services staff participated in diversity, equity and cultural inclusivity workshops
- 22** information sessions delivered in community spaces and newcomer-serving agencies
- 20** newcomers volunteering as Intellectual Disability Education Ambassadors
- 10** partnerships with settlement and ethnoculturally-specific organizations
- 7** conference presentations delivered to share resources and good practices across sectors
- 1** Bridging Diversity toolkit on ConnectABILITY.ca

**RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL
AND HUMAN RIGHTS
OBSERVANCES**

- JUNE 5**
Ramadan begins at sundown (Muslim)
- JUNE 13**
Shavuot (Jewish)
- JUNE 21**
National Aboriginal Day
- JUNE 19**
Father's Day
- JUNE 20**
World Refugee Day
- JUNE 20**
Summer Solstice
- JUNE 21**
National Aboriginal Day
- JUNE 24**
St. Jean Baptist Day (Quebec)
- JUNE 27**
Multiculturalism Day
- JULY 1**
Canada Day
- JULY 11**
Imamat Day (Ismaili Muslim)
- AUG 1**
Civic Holiday
- JULY 6**
Eid-al-Fitr (end of Ramadan)
- AUG 18**
Now-Ruz (Zoroastrian)
- AUG 25**
Janmashtami (Hindu)
- AUG 30**
Paryushana Parva (Jain)
- SEP 5**
Labour Day

For a full calendar of multicultural observances visit: www.timeanddate.com

***Note:** Muslim, Jewish and Bahá'í observances begin at previous sundown

Trillium Project — continued...

“Empowering Families Through Education” series was a joint effort between the South Asian Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC) and Community Living Toronto to educate parents in this community about such topics as housing options, advocacy in schools, navigating ConnectABILITY.ca, and Mindfulness.

- ◆ Roundtables on Newcomers and Refugees with Disabilities in Toronto, London and Ottawa in partnership with OCASI (Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants) brought together settlement and disability service providers and people with lived experiences to network and strategize for change.

Outreach

- ◆ To reach a wide range of diverse communities, we took our project on the road visiting more than 20 organizations, cultural fairs, and community groups to ensure newcomer families and parents across diverse ethnocultural communities have access to information about intellectual disability and developmental services.

- ◆ IDEA (Intellectual Disability Education Ambassadors) project in partnership with

CultureLink provided volunteer opportunities for 21 newcomers, delivering information sessions and helping families break isolation by learning about services and supports.

Education and Capacity Building

- ◆ Training sessions were provided to the DSO-TR staff over the course of two years to build capacity in diversity, equity and inclusion as it pertains to serving diverse individuals and families. Topics included cultural humility, unconscious bias, inclusive language, and supporting people with precarious immigration status, with guest-speakers from the Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic.

- ◆ Workshops and presentations were delivered to developmental sector and community support agencies with focus on equitable and inclusive service delivery and workplace culture.

- ◆ The Bridging Diversity Toolkit developed for **ConnectABILITY.ca** is a curated library of resources to help promote diversity and inclusion in our programs and communities:

www.connectability.ca/bridgingdiversity



Pictured from left to right: IDEA volunteers Kurbonbi Abduloeva, Emad Al Azazi, and Shahidah Amin staffing the outreach table at the 2016 Developmental Services Toronto Information Fair.

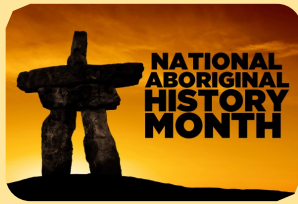


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Lessons on Equity and Inclusion from New Survey of Canadian Muslims

By Ilaneet Goren and Layla Ibrahim



JUNE IS NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HISTORY MONTH

Attend the National Aboriginal Day Flag Raising and Sunrise Ceremony at City Hall (Rotunda) on June 21st at 5 am.

Download posters and educational resources:
www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca

Call 211 or visit 211Toronto.ca for a comprehensive list of services focused on the needs of individuals in the First Nations and Métis communities.



CELEBRATE TORONTO PRIDE!

Canada's first-ever Pride Month will be launched on June 1, 2016, with extended programming and events throughout the city, culminating with the 10-day **Pride Toronto festival, June 24 – July 3**. Pride Month will begin with the city proclamation and the raising of the **Rainbow flag at Toronto City Hall on May 31 at 12 pm**. For more information visit www.pridetoronto.com

A new study by the Environics Institute offers important insight into the experiences, perceptions and realities of Muslims in Canada. The study aimed to show what it's like to be Muslim in Canada by measuring participants' perceptions on such topics as identity, values, integration, religion, and community. When the report was released in April 2016, it received a lot of attention from the media and the public because it ultimately challenged common stereotypes used to marginalize and exclude Muslim people.

What did the survey reveal? The key finding was patriotism and a strong sense of belonging among Muslim Canadians: the vast majority of survey participants (83%) said they felt "very proud" to be Canadian. Most were strongly identifying as both Muslim and Canadian, with the Muslim identity being slightly stronger. The majority were also civically engaged and had voted in the last federal election.

Close to half said they visit a mosque daily to pray, though the younger generation seems to be less religious than their parents. About half (53%) of the women reported wearing a head covering (hijab, chador or niqab), a finding that may surprise those who automatically associate Muslim women with a head scarf. While the survey showed that Muslims feel they are treated well in Canada, the majority were worried about discrimination, and over a third (35%) said they have been treated unfairly in the past five years.

Some critics raised concerns that the study still perpetuated certain stereotypes by seeking to 'prove' the Canadian-ness of Muslims in order to ease xenophobic fears and anxiety. This is at a time when mass migration and anti-immigrant sentiments are a global

issue. Others cautioned against generalizing the findings: there are over 1 million Muslims living in Canada, yet the survey only engaged 600.

How does the study relate to our work? We work in an incredibly diverse city with individuals and families from varied faiths, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. More than 200,000 residents in Toronto identify as Muslim, making Islam the second most practiced religion in our city. As service providers, we have a responsibility to learn about the issues impacting Muslim communities so that we can serve people's needs in a more culturally-appropriate way. The best learning comes from authentic interactions and conversations with people who have the lived experience. *Nothing about us without us*, as the advocates' motto goes!

We also need more research that deals specifically with the intersection of disability, faith, and culture to help our sector understand the unique needs of Muslims with disabilities. One of our community partners, Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities (CAM-D), has done a lot of work to raise awareness in this area and has produced resources on Disability and Islam that can be helpful for service providers.

There are insights that we can draw from this and other research to help us work with Muslim families in more equitable and inclusive ways:

1. Accept that we are all vulnerable to bias. In fact, our bias is unconscious and happens automatically when we meet people who we perceive as "different" from us, be it because of skin colour, religion, or sexual orientation.

Continues on page 4...



**sprOUT
Toronto**

Peer group for LGBTQ people with an intellectual disability over the age of 18. Meets every second Monday of the month at the 519 Church St. Community Centre 6 - 8 pm

**Call to register:
416-222-1153 ext. 138**

DID YOU KNOW?

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has developed policies, tools and resources to help employers and employees understand and practice their rights and responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code. They also have a template for determining accommodation in the workplace. Visit: www.ohrc.on.ca

EQUALITY OR EQUITY?

This image may look familiar to you! It has been widely used and adapted as a tool to teach people about the difference between Equality and Equity. We made a few adaptations of our own - please use and share it widely!

Attribution: Original concept and image by Craig Froehle.

Survey of Muslim Canadians — continued...

Training ourselves to become aware of biases that live within our thoughts and actions is crucial to being an inclusive service provider. Reflecting and debriefing about our biases with a trusted colleague or supervisor can help solidify our learning and develop new skills.

2. When you first meet an individual or a family who are Muslim, a good starting point is to not make assumptions or generalizations based on what you think you know about Islam or Muslim people. Don't default to the images you see in the media or pop-culture as your guide -- those are one-dimensional stereotypes. Also, try to avoid a "one size fits all" approach. Recognize that there is vast diversity within the Muslim community and that people's expressions of their faith and culture may differ depending on the person and place.

3. Learn about important Muslim holidays and observances like Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, and be mindful of scheduling programming or events during those holidays, particularly in highly diverse regions such as East York and Scarborough. Learn about Halal food

requirements, especially if you are running a group or drop-in program. Post this guide by the Toronto Public Health on your site's bulletin board for reference: http://needsinc.ca/asset_library/page/yktt/GuidetoHalalFoods.pdf

4. Recognize that discrimination and inequity are social determinants of health, which means unfair treatment can harm people's physical and psychological health. Discrimination also limits people's access to resources and opportunities, which in turn decreases quality of life. It's important that service providers recognize the systemic oppression that many Muslim families continue to face (called Islamophobia), and reflect that understanding back to build trust and therapeutic alliance. When people feel that their experiences are seen, heard and validated, they are more likely to engage in services and achieve their goals.

Learning about diversity is a life-long process. The best part— we're all on this journey together! For additional tools and resources visit the Bridging Diversity Toolkit: www.connectability.ca/BridgingDiversity

