

Defining Diversity

Diversity is commonly understood in terms of dimensions that include but are not limited to race, age, place of origin, religion, ancestry, Aboriginal status, skin colour, citizenship, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability/ability, marital, parental or family status, same-sex partnership status, creed, language, educational background, literacy level, geographic location, income level, cultural tradition and work experience.

Source: Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition

Have a comment, question or story idea? Contact me!

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Intellectual Disability Through Cultural Lens

The Intellectual Disability Education Ambassadors (IDEA) project had its first presentation on January 30th at the Victoria Park Hub. The Hub is a community space and resource centre shared by 9 organizations including Community Living Toronto, Working Women Community Centre, Family Services Toronto, Tropicana, The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, Sesheme Foundation, Bright Futures Alliance, East Toronto Chinese Baptist Church, and Action for Neighbourhood Change.

Rose Wu and Salma Banu - two CultureLink volunteers who are part of the IDEA project - assisted with a presentation to an audience of over 25 staff, students and community members. Salma presented information about different types of disabilities and clarified some myths and misconceptions about intellectual disability. She also offered to translate some of the terms used in the developmental sector into Hindi. Participants had many questions and



a few members stayed behind to ask about specific services, including how to help a family new to Canada find the right support for their child with special needs, where to get funding, and how to offer help in a culturally sensitive way. The audience feedback was positive, with members appreciating the cultural sensitivity and diversity lens through which the information was delivered. One audience member noted that all community presentations should be delivered this way. Both Salma and Rose said they are looking forward to their next opportunity to present to the community.

“I don’t want to leave a part of myself at the door.”

Building relationships with local groups and communities is a crucial part of our work. The cold winter hasn’t deterred Bridging Diversity members from attending various equity events and networking fiercely. Here are some of the highlights:

February was marked by celebration and deepening awareness of Black History. On February 18th, we were invited to a panel of Black LGBTQ youth organized by the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto. The panelists spoke about the challenges they have lived through growing up and the discriminatory attitudes they continue to face today. They shared

about what helped them through the difficult times with examples that included: a staff willing to listen and accept the young person for who they are while helping them find their voice and community; a family member who learned to accept despite cultural or religious backlash; and a caregiver who chose to nurture and support rather than denying the person the right to be who they are. The most powerful message to service providers was simple: No one wants to leave a part of themselves at the door when they come to us for services. It is our responsibility to be inclusive and kind.

Check out photos from the event on our Facebook page:

Multicultural Calendar

- March 5 ♦ Happy Holi (Hindu)
- March 5 ♦ Purim (Jewish)
- March 6 ♦ Hola Mohalla (Sikh)
- March 17 ♦ St. Patrick's Day
- March 20-21 ♦ New Year celebrations for Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu and Zoroastrian faiths
- March 21 ♦ Naw Ruz (Persian)
- March 29 ♦ Palm Sunday (Christian)
- April 3 ♦ Good Friday (Christian)
- April 3-11 ♦ Passover (Jewish)
- April 5,12 ♦ Easter or Pascha (Christian, Orthodox)
- April 13,14 ♦ Vaisakhi (Hindu, Sikh)
- May 4 ♦ Blessed Wesak (Buddhist)
- May 24 ♦ Pentecost (Christian)
- Ma 24-25 ♦ Shavuot (Jewish)

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCES

- March 8** International Women's Day
- March 21** International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- April 2** World Autism Awareness Day
- May 21** World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

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

To register: 416-222-1153 ext. 138



THIS NEWSLETTER AND OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE ON SHAREPOINT

Reflections on Rights, Identity and Inclusion

By Melissa Turner, Diversity Intern (Ryerson Social Work Student)

Inclusion Day is a conference held at York University that brings together researchers, lawyers and community leaders to discuss the topics of human rights and identity. This was the sixth year the conference was held, and this year's theme was Past Histories and Present Stories: Finding Meaning in Human Rights. I attended Inclusion Day to learn more about work being done in the area of immigration and access to social services for immigrant families. I wanted to better understand the current research being done in this area and what it looks like when situated in a human rights context.

The first presenter was Luz Vazquez discussing her research on immigrant mothers accessing services for children with developmental disabilities. Luz acknowledged that there is limited research in this area and that more is needed to better understand the experiences of immigrant families. She challenged researchers to include human rights in their work and asked all of us to consider how barriers to services for immigrant families are transgressions of human rights. When framed in this way, the

barriers to service that we so often discuss - such as access to translation and more culturally sensitive services - become so much more than merely issues of accessibility. Luz also noted that we "need to make socially visible the rights of immigrant mothers." Social services often educate service users on their rights, however Luz suggested that service providers need to be aware of the rights of all people walking in their doors. This, she said, will begin to address the issue of discrimination faced by immigrant mothers accessing services.

Luz's work left me with much to think about; How do we begin to change the conversation from a list of structural barriers that prevent equitable access to health care to requirements that must be met to protect basic human rights? What are the gaps between human rights and the service user's rights and how do we educate service providers that both are necessary? Finally, as a leader in developmental disability services, what is the role of Community Living Toronto in pursuing and promoting research that is completed through a human rights lens?

Newcomers with Disabilities Roundtables in Toronto, London and Ottawa

Did you know that newcomer families are more likely to experience barriers when accessing services? With this in mind, we were thrilled to partner with the Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) to co-host a series of roundtable discussions on improving access to services for newcomers with disabilities. Our goal: to bring settlement and disability sector professionals together to share their challenges, strategies and resources, and most importantly, improve collaboration between the sectors.

OCASI will be sharing lessons from the Accessibility Training they have been conducting with settlement agencies. Community Living Toronto will focus on inclusion of people with intellectual disability and the ways in which settlement workers can help newcomer families connect to developmental services. The three events will be held in March. Visit our website for more information and registration: www.cltoronto.ca