

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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It's been a year: Diversity project highlights

Hard to believe it's been a whole year since we received the funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to embark on a 2-year initiative centered on building capacity and sustainability in diversity and inclusion for our sector. We'd like to update you on the progress of the project, and also share some of the highlights we're really excited about:

- Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in Service Access was the theme of this year's sector information fair put together by the Developmental Services Toronto (dsto). It was the perfect opportunity to launch the Bridging Diversity Toolkit on ConnectABILITY.ca. Over 40 people attended the launch session at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, including family members, service providers and individuals accessing services. Our team also set up an outreach table where we played a communal Diversity Bingo. For a template of the game which you can use with your team or program visit:

www.connectability.ca/bridgingdiversity

- The first segment of the research, focusing on the experiences of immigrant families accessing Adult Developmental Services, is completed. Forty five (45)

responses were collected from on-line and paper surveys. The next phase, which involves one-on-one interviews with family members, will take place over the summer with the help of our Diversity Project Assistant and Summer Student. The results will be used to develop recommendations for service improvement with respect to servicing diverse families.

- Over the Spring months, Intellectual Disability Education Ambassadors helped us reach over 60 newcomers and diverse community members through culturally and language-specific outreach. Throughout April and May we delivered customized Access information sessions at Tesoc Multicultural Settlement Agency and South Asian Autism Awareness Centre. Earlier in February, we participated in the World Hijab Day organized by the ANNISAA Organization of Canada where we spoke to women in the Muslim community about the challenges in receiving culturally-appropriate services for children and adults with special needs. As a result, we are now exploring a new partnership with ANNISAA in order to help bridge these gaps through education and service collaboration.

New Toolkit Helps Build Common Ground!

The toolkit is designed to guide you through a three-step learning process: **Step 1** is understanding and appreciating our differences; **Step 2** is connecting based on what we share in common; and **Step 3** is learning to be more inclusive. Each step begins with a 5-6 minute video that you can watch by yourself, with colleagues or program participants. After each video, use the Discussion Guide questions as a group activity or as a personal reflection exercise. You can also download handouts and activities, and

browse through the Additional Resources section to explore a range of equity and diversity topics.

Bridging Diversity Toolkit





**Religious, Cultural and
National Observances**

- June 1** Vesak (Buddhism)
- June 1** Global Day of Parents
- June 5** World Environment Day
- June 18** Ramadan begins (Islam)
- June 20** World Refugee Day
- June 21** National Aboriginal Day
- June 21** Father's Day
- June 27** Multiculturalism Day
- July 18/19** Naw Ruz (Zoroastrian)
- July 26** Tish'a B'av (Judaism)
- Aug 3** Civic Holiday
- Aug 12** International Youth Day
- Aug 29** Raksha Bandhan (Hindu)

THIS NEWSLETTER AND
OTHER HELPFUL
RESOURCES ARE
AVAILABLE ON
SHAREPOINT

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

“...let them worship how, where, or what they may.”

Balancing the right to free expression with respect for human rights

By Susan Rowe, Resource Teacher, Central Region

In the early 1980s I served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; it was one of the greatest learning experiences of my life! My mission gave me daily opportunities to meet and talk with many good people about their beliefs as well as my own. In our discussions I discovered that most people were passionate about their freedom and right to live as they chose.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion...and freedom either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

In Canada today we have the freedom to live as we please; it is crucial that we as individuals, communities and a nation continue to defend this right. We all believe in something and it may not be religion – it may be in science or luck or in ourselves. Whatever we believe, our rights to follow and build our lives on our beliefs could be taken away from us if we do not stand together to defend every individual's right to choose for themselves how they will live their life!

Equally important to defending our own rights to live as we choose is our responsibility to engage with *respect* for each other's beliefs and diverse identities. Although we also have the right to

freedom of expression, it is also our responsibility to use that freedom wisely and thoughtfully, to seriously consider that just as we have very deep feelings for what we believe, so too, do other people have very deep feelings for what they believe. Community Living Toronto teaches us through the game of *Spinclusion* that when we mock or put down other people's beliefs, that means we are bullying!

As a missionary I learned many valuable lessons that have guided me through the years; the following are two of those lessons:

- 1) We all have the right to *respectfully* declare and live our own beliefs insofar as they uphold human rights.
- 2) Though we may not agree with each other's beliefs we can still defend each other's right to choose to live according to their beliefs.

Members of my faith, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, declare:

“We claim the privilege of worshipping all mighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”

My hope is that we will each engrave these principles into our hearts and be fierce defenders of all individuals' right to choose to live according to one's own beliefs.



Did You Know?

Bridging Diversity has recently partnered with ANNISAA, an organization promoting social and economic opportunities for Muslim women across Canada. The goal of our partnership is to increase outreach to Muslim women and families in order to improve access to information about intellectual disability and developmental services in Toronto.

For more information visit www.annisaa.org.