



# Intercultural Intelligence

Working with Cultural Diversity in the  
Community Disability Services Sector

**HANDBOOK**

# **Intercultural Intelligence: A Handbook for Working with Cultural Diversity in the Community Disability Services Sector**

February 2015

## **Acknowledgments**

The Government of Alberta generously provided funding for the creation and piloting of this resource. By investing in this research, the funders have highlighted the pressing need to build capacity and develop resources to equip agencies to work more effectively with increasingly diverse workforces.

Thanks and sincere appreciation to those who have given their time and consideration to this project. Without their help and input, it would not have been possible.

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## What People in Your Sector are Saying

*“How do you create an inclusive and culturally competent organization? Acknowledging cultural differences in the workplace is our reality. This resource and the expertise the pages hold bring the disabilities sector and our workplace closer to valuing all individual differences including that of our staff. What a tremendous gift for the disabilities sector in having a valuable resource to assist us with cultural competence and diversity management. Many thanks to the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES) in leading this project in partnership with the Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS).”*

- Helene De Klerk, Executive Director

*“In today’s Community Disability Services Sector, engaged, committed and productive teams require each staff member to work intelligently across the different cultures in our workforce. This resource will assist both front-line workers and leadership teams to develop the intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively work together in providing exceptional services for the individuals that we serve.”*

- Bruce Skorobohach, Director

*“The content of this resource emphasizes/values just enough to let the readers/users understand and apply them for their personal consumption and improvement, and is also very useful for family/home, community socialization or at work.”*

- Rosalinda Delacruz, Team Leader

*“This resource will go a long way to promote an effective and inclusive multicultural workplace. It is well designed to assist in resolving the unspoken conflicts and assumptions of the Canadian multicultural workplace. It will assist readers to understand that no culture is superior to any other culture.”*

- Patrick Otakpor, Practitioner

*“It has been a great privilege for me to go through intercultural intelligence training. It has not only changed the way I look at things, but has made me to be a better person and improved the way I communicate. I feel more confident and integrated into the Canadian work society where production and excellence is the goal.”*

- Esther Ebune, Practitioner

*“I think this resource is awesome. It encourages you to be proud of your culture and heritage, and embrace the other ones around you.”*

- Mauricio Martinez, Practitioner

*“Everybody in this sector should make themselves acquainted with this resource. It is based on years of research and in-depth knowledge of the issues around "Intercultural Intelligence". This resource promotes awareness and understanding of cultural differences to enhance the working environment and services provided by the Canadian Disability Services Sector. Thus, it should become an essential part of mandatory training for any disability service provider in our multicultural society.”*

- Magda Burchacki, Practitioner

# Building a Skilled Workforce Through Essential Skills

This handbook is a result of the *Building a Skilled Workforce Through Essential Skills* project funded by the Government of Alberta. The Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES) is leading this project in partnership with the Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS).

The project purpose is to develop organizational capacity in the disability services sector, through training and Workplace Essential Skills (WES) development, to increase the engagement and effectiveness of a diverse workforce.

## What are Workplace Essential Skills?

WES are the “skills needed for work, learning and life”. There are nine WES: oral communication, document use, reading text, writing, working with others, digital technology, continuous learning, numeracy, and thinking skills. A full description of each skill can be found on the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) website, under the search term “Literacy and Essential Skills” ([www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/les//index.shtml](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/les//index.shtml)).

## Why are Workplace Essential Skills Important?

Having strong WES is like being a tree with a strong root system: it gives protection in difficult economic times and enables growth. People with strong WES are able to learn new skills more easily, and then transfer that learning from one context to another with less effort. For example, strong WES helps people transition into new roles or cross-train.

## Where are the Workplace Essential Skills in this Resource?

The framework of the nine WES was used to conduct the needs assessments for this sector. The WES information from the needs assessment was used to help select and frame the content for this handbook. You will find specific references to the WES in each of the case studies in this resource. The main WES that the handbook focuses on helping you develop are: thinking skills (critical thinking, decision making, problem solving), working with others, oral communication, and continuous learning.

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# Overview

## The Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook is designed to raise the intercultural awareness of people working in the Community Disability Services Sector (CDSS), and build the basic skills to work effectively in a multicultural workplace. It is not designed to replace face-to-face diversity training. Instead it can be used to support workshop training, new employee onboarding, mentoring, self-directed learning, and team learning.

## Target Audience

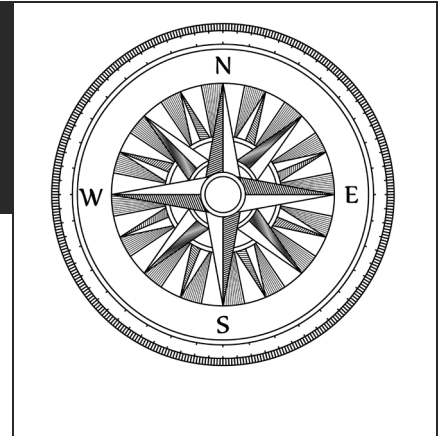
The handbook will develop the intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes for all CDSS employees from frontline workers to agency leadership teams.

## How to Use the Handbook

The handbook can be used in the following ways, or adapted to the specific needs of agencies.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <b>Workshop Training</b>                | Integrate the handbook with related learning resources in face-to-face training.  |
| 2. <b>New Employee Onboarding</b>          | Include a copy of the handbook in the new employee orientation package for new hires as required reading and part of their orientation process.   |
| 3. <b>Mentoring</b>                        | Partner new hires with a mentor who can guide them through the handbook and discuss the questions and provide specialized support.  |
| 4. <b>Self-Directed Learning</b>           | Both the existing workforce and new hires should have access to the handbook to work through the content and questions at their own pace.   |
| 5. <b>Team Learning</b>                    | Teams can use the handbook to create a “community of practice” – a group of people who share a profession and engage in a group learning experience.  |
| 6. <b>Intercultural Advisory Committee</b> | Agencies with workforces that are very culturally diverse could form an internal intercultural advisory committee to bring cultural expertise and help create a high functioning multicultural organization. The handbook is a suitable foundational document to guide the committee's scope and mandate. |
| 7. <b>Intercultural Specialists</b>        | Agencies can work towards building in-house intercultural expertise in specific employees. Additional learning, best practices and resources can be added to the handbook according to each agency's needs.   |

# Guided Tour of the Handbook's Features



This handbook has features to help you grow in your understanding of cultural diversity for working in a multicultural workplace. This guided tour of the features tells you what to expect and how to get the most out of this resource.

<p><b>Six Modules</b></p> <p>The handbook is organized into two sections and six modules. Section 1 includes the three essential cultural lenses needed to understand the diversity from the sector, agency and team perspectives. Section 2 focuses on three important intercultural concepts.</p>	<p><b>Module Outlines</b></p> <p>At the start of each module is an outline of the topics, a short summary of the content, a set of learning outcomes, and a main point.</p>
<p><b>Case Studies</b></p> <p>Each module has one or more case studies. The case studies are authentic stories from new and native-born Canadians who have experienced the challenges and success of working with people from other cultural backgrounds. Names and certain details have been changed to keep their stories anonymous. Examples of the relevant Workplace Essential Skills tasks are included at the end of each case study. These highlight the key skills needed within the sector occupations to complete specific job tasks.</p>	<p><b>Charts</b></p> <p>Each module has one or more charts that help organize and explain the information, and make learning easier.</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p>At the end of the last module are four appendices including a list of six best practices for working in a multicultural agency, a useful intercultural model, and suggested resources that can be used to expand your intercultural knowledge beyond this handbook.</p>	<p><b>Reviews</b></p> <p>At the end of each module is a set of review questions. The Reflection Questions are for your personal thoughts. They ask you to think about how the content might affect your thoughts, behaviours or attitudes. The Comprehension Questions test your knowledge of the content in the module.</p>

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# Key Definitions

The following definitions are important to remember throughout this handbook. They will lay a strong foundation for what it means to be culturally competent in a multicultural workplace.

1	<b>Culture</b>	A group's shared "norms" i.e. patterns of speaking, behaving and thinking in various situations. Culture can describe the people from a region, country, province, town, organization or even a team. Culture defines the group dimension of human experience.
2	<b>Cultural Distance</b>	Cultural distance refers to the degree of psychological adjustment (a change in ways of thinking) that a newcomer to a culture needs to make to bridge the differences between the first and new culture. <sup>1</sup> In other words, the adjustment for newcomers whose culture is more similar to Canadian culture is easier.
3	<b>Departure Point</b>	A departure point is a way to talk about tendencies (refer to the definition below) while recognizing the complexity of each person. Each individual is a highly complex being with a unique core identity. Therefore, other kinds of human diversity need to be considered when analyzing cultural differences (e.g. personality type, generation, gender, and life experience).
4	<b>Ethnicity</b>	There is no universally accepted definition of the term "ethnicity/ethnic group". The term is often used interchangeably with other terms like nationality, culture and language community. Broadly speaking, ethnicity is a social group whose members identify with each other through a common ancestral, social, cultural, or national experience (e.g. Han Chinese, Inuit, Slavic, Hispanic, Romany, Germanic, Celtic, Semitic, Persian, Hebrew, Basque, Hungarian, Greek, Berber, and Bantu).
5	<b>Immigrant</b>	A person who moved to Canada from a different country and is now a permanent resident/citizen. This term is interchangeable with the terms immigrant, newcomer or new Canadian.
6	<b>Multiculturalism</b>	In its broadest definition, multiculturalism describes the cultural and ethnic makeup of a society. Canada is one of the most multicultural societies in the world and the first country to have a federal multiculturalism act.
7	<b>Nationality</b>	Belonging to a country through citizenship (e.g. Canadian, British, French, American, Mexican, South African).
8	<b>Norms</b>	The behaviours common to a specific cultural group. These are also known as "expected norms" or "mainstream norms".
9	<b>Race</b>	The term race relates to each of the major categories of humankind having distinct physical characteristics. Although still used in general contexts, <i>race</i> is often replaced by less ambiguous and emotionally charged terms such as population, ethnic group or community, depending on the context.
10	<b>Stereotype</b>	Stereotypes are fixed, <b>oversimplified</b> ideas about a particular group of people. They are usually negative labels that lead to discrimination and the exclusion of people.
11	<b>Tendency</b>	Statements about cultural norms are actually statements about tendencies. A tendency is a type of conduct (behaviour, communication or thinking) that one can <b>expect</b> from a cultural group most of the time, but not all of the time or from all the people.

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<sup>1</sup> Stella Ting-Toomey, author of *Communicating Across Cultures* (The Guilford Press, 1999).



## Module 1 Outline

1. Introduction
2. Beliefs about Disabilities
  - 2.1 Beliefs about Causes
  - 2.2 Beliefs about Expectations
  - 2.3 Beliefs about Responses
3. The Approach of the CDSS
4. Case Study
5. Review Questions

## Overview

This module explains the “community development” view as a model to support people with disabilities. It explores the core beliefs that form the sector’s culture, namely client participation, equality, independence and self-sufficiency. This module will ask you to reflect on the beliefs you bring from your cultural and family origins towards people with disabilities. There is a special focus on the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* as a global standard of beliefs for those working in the disabilities sector.

## Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, you will understand:

1. The community development model is the approach employees should take in the workplace towards people with disabilities.
2. The various social factors that can shape people’s beliefs and responses to disabilities.
3. The rights of persons with disabilities and the responsibilities of CDSS professionals to provide services centered on those rights.

## Main Point

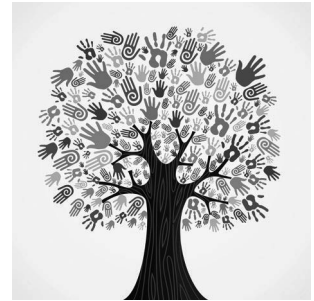
In the workplace, each CDSS team member should set aside personal attitudes towards disabilities and work as a team to support clients towards their individual potential for full participation in society, equality, independence, and economic self-sufficiency.

# 1. Introduction

Like any sector, the Community Disability Services Sector (CDSS) has a specific workplace culture. How employees are expected to act and think is both similar and different to other occupations.

## Similar

The CDSS culture is similar to other sectors in the sense that Canada has a **mainstream** workplace culture. Employees are expected to follow those norms. It doesn't matter if you are a disability practitioner at an agency, a veterinarian at a clinic, or an engineer at a company, there are certain norms that are common to every workplace such as meeting deadlines.<sup>2</sup>



## Different

But the sector is also different from other sectors by way of the clients it serves, the services it provides and the skills required to deliver those services. In addition the sector's workforce is one of the most culturally diverse. Up to 70 percent of the workforce in some agencies originates from other countries.

It is these basic differences that this handbook explores, starting with the sector's mandate and the beliefs that form each person's basic attitude stemming from their cultural context.

# 2. Beliefs about Disabilities

Our mental models shape our beliefs. Mental models are the *understandings we carry around in our heads about how things work in the world*. Our social experiences in family, school, community and work, along with our cultural lenses, shape our mental models. We carry these mental models everywhere we go. They inform our values and influence our behaviours. Everyone has a mental model about disabilities. That model includes beliefs about the following:

1. What **causes** disabilities
2. What one should **expect** from a person with a disability
3. How we should **respond** to a person with a disability

Your beliefs about the causes of disabilities can have a significant effect on your expectations of a person with a disability and, in turn, influence your responses to the person. Ultimately, beliefs shape the work practices of each employee in the sector. It is important that every CDSS professional think about their social experiences and cultural lenses. You need to be aware of beliefs you bring to your clients, as well as to the **community development model**, which will be discussed later in this module. Once you know the beliefs you bring, you should align your work practices with the community development approach.

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<sup>2</sup> For more detailed information on the mainstream workplace culture, see the *Workplace Integration Desk Reference*, available on the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills (AWES) website under the Tools and Publications tab, <http://www.awes.ca/services/tools-and-publications/>.

## 2.1. Beliefs about Causes

People take at least two different views on the causes of disabilities: scientific and moral.<sup>3</sup> As stated, those beliefs are shaped primarily through our social and cultural experiences.

### Scientific View

The scientific view ascribes disabilities to **genetics, environment, random chance** or related factors. It is also called the medical model. The strengths and weaknesses of a purely scientific view are listed below.

*Genetics* A disability is caused by one or more variations in the gene. The difference could be a missing, extra or irregular portion of chromosomal DNA.

*Environment* A disability is due to environmental factors (e.g. contact with pollution or other harmful agents, or events during pregnancy such as insufficient nutrition or the consumption of alcohol).

*Random Chance* A disability is a result of accidents, injuries or diseases.

**+** **Strengths** The scientific view is solutions oriented (focused). It seeks to treat and overcome disabilities through the right medical interventions (help) (e.g. medicine, therapy and surgery).

**-** **Weaknesses** It fails to treat the disability holistically (all parts not just one part). By only taking a medical approach, it deals with symptoms in instead of all parts of a person's life. The medical model can end up focusing too much on fixing the person.

### Moral View

The moral view ascribes the disability to a **supernatural** force or some moral failing such as:

- God's punishment (i.e. as a result of personal sins)
- Generational curse (i.e. a punishment passed down as a result of one's ancestors' sins)
- Karma (i.e. a direct result of a person's moral failings in this or a previous life)
- Curse (i.e. from a witchdoctor or other person with spiritual powers)
- Ancestors (i.e. one has done something to upset one's deceased ancestors who are inflicting punishment)
- Evil spirits who seek out people in order to oppress them
- God's will (i.e. a test from God to develop moral character)
- Disturbance during pregnancy (e.g. violating a superstition or taboo – telling people too soon about being pregnant, not following a specific dietary practice, having temper tantrums)
- Weak character (e.g. poor self-discipline, bad personal habits, lack of willpower, negative thoughts or other emotional problems)

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<sup>3</sup> The lists of scientific and moral factors are not exhaustive, but were adapted from Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, *Counseling the Culturally-Diverse - Theory and Practice* (John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey, 2013), p.529-530; and John H. Stone, *Culture and Disability - Providing Culturally Competent Services* (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 2005) p. 121.

**+ Strengths**

The moral view recognizes that persons with disabilities are not just biological beings, but are complex people, and that the spiritual part is in everyone's makeup. In some circumstances, *outside of the CDSS role*, spiritual counseling from a professional can provide meaning and comfort to persons with disabilities and their families. But such support is not in the mandate of the CDSS and in fact crosses a professional boundary for CDSS employees.

**- Weaknesses**

The moral view is focused on "why" the disability happened, and so it easily errs on the side of fatalism. It might prevent the individual from seeking medical treatment, or support services. In the worst cases, it can lead to feelings of shame and rejection by the community.

## 2.2. Beliefs about Expectations

A person's set of beliefs about the causes of disabilities can lead to very different ideas about the kind of participation that one should expect from a person with a disability. Cultural, technological and physical barriers in society may also influence the view of participation.

### The Right to FULL PARTICIPATION

Canadian policy states that people with disabilities have **the right to full participation** in their societies, the economies and communities. However, in certain places participation is limited due to barriers caused by discrimination against people with disabilities. Read through the definition of full participation below, taken from *Canada's Federal Disability Reference Guide*. Compare this definition with examples of contrasting behaviour.

#### Full Participation in Canada

Full participation means that people have opportunities to participate fully in society, the economy and the community, without physical, technological and cultural barriers. Breaking down barriers can help facilitate the full inclusion and participation of people with disabilities.

#### Examples of Contrasting Behaviour

- People might feel ashamed of family members who have disabilities, so they limit their exposure to the outside world.
- The family fears criticism and disgrace so they hide the family member with a disability from the public.
- The person with the disability doesn't get the opportunities to go to school, work, volunteer or socialize in society.



### Core Canadian Beliefs about Disabilities

In Canada, people with disabilities have the following rights:

1. Full participation in society, community and economy
2. Equality of opportunity
3. Opportunity for independent living
4. Economic self-sufficiency



## 2.3. Beliefs about Responses

A person's set of beliefs about the causes of disabilities can lead to very different ideas about the kind of responses that society should have towards a person with a disability. Apart from cultural, technological and physical barriers, economic factors can also affect our responses to people with disabilities.

### The Right to EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

People with disabilities have the right to equal opportunity. Read through the definition of equal opportunity below, taken from Canada's *Federal Disability Reference Guide*. Compare this definition with examples of contrasting behaviour.

#### Equal Opportunity in Canada

The belief in Canada is that every person with a disability should have the opportunity to remain in his or her local community and **receive needed supports** from mainstream education, health, employment, and social services, as well as specialized services and supports where required. It should be noted that although the Canadian view on equal opportunity is policy, it does not imply that the Canadian system is perfect. However, policy does give people with disabilities recourse to challenge inequality.

#### Examples of Contrasting Behaviour

- People might treat different categories of disabilities unequally and be more accepting towards an acquired disability such as through an accident, than towards a congenital disability (from birth) or mental disability.
- In some communities, the person with a disability, and likely the family, is alienated (isolated) by the community and becomes ostracized (excluded). The person with a disability is denied access to schools or employment.
- Parents or guardians are unaware of what the person could achieve with the proper accommodations and resources.
- The public avoids the person due to ignorance, such as a fear of the disability, or because of the awkwardness of not knowing how to respond appropriately.



*The Canadian response to people with disabilities is to make every effort to afford them equal opportunity so that they can live as independently as possible, and gain appropriate economic self-sufficiency.*



## The Right to INDEPENDENT LIVING

People with disabilities have the right to independent living. Read through the definition of independent living below, taken from Canada's *Federal Disability Reference Guide*. Compare this definition with examples of contrasting behaviour.

### Opportunity for Independent Living in Canada

The principle of independent living advocates for a society where people with disabilities have opportunities to **live life to the fullest and take advantage of what society has to offer**. Independent living enables people with disabilities to achieve their potential and fulfill their rights and responsibilities as Canadian citizens.

### Examples of Contrasting Behaviour

- Parents or guardians might reject the person with a disability. Others may react with overprotection, acting as if the person is totally dependent, even when the person might be capable of engaging in various activities.
- Family members impose a "sick" label on the person with the disability – as a result, the person is not expected to do much. He or she has no active role in decision-making. The family makes the decisions without consulting the person.

## The Right to ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

People with disabilities have the right to economic self-sufficiency. Read through the definition of economic self-sufficiency below, taken from Canada's *Federal Disability Reference Guide*. Compare this definition with examples of contrasting behaviour.

### Economic Self-Sufficiency in Canada

Promoting self-sufficiency (ability to manage alone) and independence is of key importance to program design and service delivery. While individual needs will differ, the **starting presumption should be one of independence**, rather than dependence, with public services providing the support needed to maximize the self-sufficiency of people with disabilities.

### Examples of Contrasting Behaviour

- Employers would rather pay fines than employ someone with a disability.
- The family may love the person but view him or her as worthless since the person cannot do anything and they must do everything for the person with a disability.



*"Every member of staff should have the same starting point towards their clients, namely one of independence, not dependence. I approach each client as a blank slate. I don't pre-judge them, what they can or can't do. I am there to help them achieve their goals – not to get in the way."* - CDSS Practitioner



### 3. The Approach of the CDSS

The culture, or the norms, of Community Disability Services Sector (CDSS) is formed around the clients it serves and the policies it follows. The patterns of speaking, behaving and thinking are **person-centered**. They spring from the Canadian approach to disabilities based on the core values as expressed in the UN convention.

#### The Canadian Approach to Disabilities is Grounded in the UN Convention

1. The Canadian approach is grounded in the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Canada ratified (signed and gave formal consent to) the convention in 2010.
2. Historically, Canada, like many other nations, has not always treated people with disabilities according to the UN convention. The 1982 *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was Canada's first official policy to include the protection of the rights of people with disabilities. Over the past few decades, a number of publications, position papers and court decisions have also helped shape disability policy in Canada.
3. It is also essential to know that the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* is NOT a Western approach to disabilities. Neither is it a Canadian idea. Instead, like all UN initiatives, it represents a global ambition by people from all national and cultural backgrounds.
4. The convention follows decades of work by the UN to change attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. The historical background to the convention notes the following:



*It takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.<sup>5</sup>*

#### The CDSS Takes the Community Development Approach

The second main contributor that affects the culture of the CDSS is the community development approach, which is holistic and integrative. It treats the symptoms both scientifically and in relation to other aspects of the person's life. It aims to remove societal barriers, prejudices, negative attitudes and lack of accommodations. As an approach, it sees a disability along a continuum from enablement to disablement, and as a product of the interaction between individual and environmental characteristics.

<sup>4</sup> See *Federal Disability Reference Guide*, Employment and Social Development Canada, [www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/arc/reference\\_guide.pdf](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/disability/arc/reference_guide.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> See the UN page for the Convention on RPD, at [www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=15&pid=150](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=15&pid=150). The graphic was drawn from the UN site.



Chart 1 below compares the norms of different “cultures” of disability services with Canadian norms. It also provides a clear summary of the Canadian norms towards disabilities.

**Chart 1** Comparison between Canada’s Disability Norms and Some Parts of the World

	Canadian CDSS Norms		Norms in Some Parts of the World
1 <b>Model</b>	Community Development	← →	Focus on one or a combination of the following views: Medical - Moral - Minority Rights
2 <b>Approach</b>	Holistic. Integrative.	← →	Treatment. Rejection or Overprotection. Advocacy.
3 <b>Causes</b>	A result of the interaction between the individual and the environment	← →	Genetics. Environment. Random Chance. Supernatural. Personal Weakness. Discrimination.
4 <b>Expectation for Participation</b>	Full participation	← →	Barriers to participation i.e. cultural, technological, environmental and economic
5 <b>Response to Equal Opportunity</b>	Equality	← →	Discrimination. Alienation. Ignorance.
6 <b>Response to Independent Living</b>	Independence	← →	Lack of self-determination
7 <b>Response to Economic Self-Sufficiency</b>	Economic self-sufficiency	← →	Economic dependence
8 <b>Key Words</b>	Empower. Growth. Informed Choice. Opportunity. Dignity. Contribution. Full Life.	← →	Barriers. Limited. Overly Dependent. Hide. Stigma. Fatalism. Lack of Opportunity.



*“The CDSS culture flows out of our values and our mandate, which some people misunderstand in the beginning. Our role is to empower people with disabilities, not to do everything for them. I am not a nurse to care for them, nor a doctor to fix them or a priest to advise them. Instead, we come alongside to be part of the solution, for meaningful contribution to their communities. This is the community development approach.” - CDSS Staff Member*

## 4. Case Study #1

### Adam's Beliefs and Expectations about Disabilities are Challenged

**Background** Adam has been in Canada for almost two decades but he still recalls the first time he encountered a person with a developmental disability in a workplace. He had immigrated to Canada from a part of the world where people with disabilities were usually kept at home with their families, and rarely had a chance to work.



**Stereotype** Adam was in a bookstore looking for a specific magazine when Sam approached him. Sam had Down Syndrome. The bookstore employed Sam as a customer service representative.

He asked Adam if he needed any help. Adam was surprised when Sam spoke to him. Then Adam noticed Sam's nametag and his store uniform. He was surprised. He couldn't figure out why a store would hire someone with a developmental disability. In fact, Adam was not used to seeing a person with a developmental disability in public. Usually, families kept such people at home because of the stigma and shame attached to many disabilities. Moreover, there was no caregiver nearby. Sam was working independently, without support. In his family and society, Adam had never seen or heard about this type of situation.

Sam repeated his question, "Can I help you find something, sir?" Adam felt very awkward. He didn't know how to respond. He looked around to see if anyone was nearby. He even wondered if he was in the middle of some practical joke. "I am looking for a magazine," he said reluctantly. "Which magazine?" Sam asked. Adam told him and Sam proceeded to take him to the magazine shelves to the magazine he wanted.

**Smashed Stereotype** Adam was surprised by the experience and embarrassed by his assumptions. The experience with Sam had shattered the stereotype he had about what is possible for people with disabilities. Sam is an equal. With the right to work and be independent. To contribute to society. Adam's mental model of persons with disabilities had been remade.

#### Essential Skill

**Critical Thinking** Practitioners consider workplace policies in order to align their professional conduct with sector standards to serve clients.

## 5. Review Questions

### Reflection Questions

Complete the following questions independently, with a mentor, or a learning partner or group.

1. What views do you bring towards people with disabilities? Your family, society, generation or cultural backgrounds have contributed to shaping these views. How do those views hinder or help the clients you work with?
2. What beliefs do you bring about the causes of disabilities? Do those beliefs impact client services?
3. What expectations do you hold for people with disabilities? Do those beliefs impact client services?
4. What do you believe should be society's response towards people with disabilities?
5. What beliefs do clients and their guardians bring? How could those beliefs affect the services to clients?

### Comprehension Questions

Answer the following multiple-choice questions.

1. Which of the following definitions best describes the community development model for people with disabilities?
  - a) Dependent and safe
  - b) Equal protection
  - c) Holistic and integrative
  - d) Barriers without discrimination
  
2. The CDSS approach towards disabilities is grounded in which one of the following?
  - a) Canadian culture
  - b) The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
  - c) Publications, positions and court decisions
  - d) Western global ambitions



### Module 2 Outline

1. What is Multiculturalism?
2. What are my Rights and Responsibilities?
3. What are my Language Rights and Responsibilities?
4. Guidelines for Working with Language Diversity
5. Case Study
6. Review Questions

### Overview

This module explains the multicultural make-up of most agencies in the CDSS. It explores rights and responsibilities in terms of multiculturalism. This module will ask you to reflect on how to make your multicultural workplace more inclusive by shifting the focus on rights to responsibilities. There is a special focus on language rights and using English as the language of inclusion.

### Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, you will understand:

1. The reasons Canada is so culturally diverse and the valuable contribution of immigrants to the Canadian economy and society.
2. Everyone's rights and responsibilities to make the multicultural workplace inclusive.

### Main Point

In the workplace, everyone needs to know their rights so that they can act freely on their responsibilities to be inclusive of those different to them. They need to be aware of when diversity is an advantage and when it might exclude others, and then use good judgment in working on a multicultural team.

# 1. What is Multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism is a defining characteristic of many agencies in the CDSS. To get a deeper understanding of multiculturalism, we should see it through four different lenses: a fact of society, a set of ideas, a policy, and a process.<sup>6</sup>

MULTICULTURALISM	
FACT	IDEAS
POLICY	PROCESS

## Multiculturalism is a Fact

Multiculturalism is a sociological fact in Canada. Our cultural diversity is obvious when you walk the streets of most of our major cities.<sup>7</sup>

- In cities such as Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, ethnic minorities make up more than 50 percent of the population. Even in many rural communities, cultural diversity is rapidly becoming the norm.
- Canada accepted 1.2 million immigrants between 2006 and 2011.
- Canada's immigrant population is the highest in 75 years: 6.8 million or 20.6% of the population.
- Canada has the highest immigrant population of the G8 countries. Germany comes in second with about 13%.

## Multiculturalism is a Set of Ideas

Multiculturalism is a coherent set of ideas that relate to the celebration of Canada's cultural mosaic. Multiculturalism affirms the following ideas:

- The value and dignity of all Canadians regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, language, or religious beliefs.
- All citizens can keep their cultural identities, take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging.
- The potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs.

## Why is the workplace so multicultural?

*An Aging Population and Low Replacement Fertility Rate*

- Like a number of nations in the developed world, the Canadian population is aging and our current total fertility rate of 1.61<sup>8</sup> is far below the minimum 2.11 replacement level. Without immigration, Canada's natural population growth would not be enough to sustain economic growth and welfare.
- Currently, 14.8 percent of our population is in the 65 years of age or older category.<sup>9</sup> By the early 2030s that percentage is expected to rise close to 25 percent, or 1 in 4 people.
- As a result, the proportion of foreign-born workers will need to increase. Some estimates suggest that by 2031, one in every three workers will have been born outside of Canada.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The four lenses that follow were adapted from Marc Leman, *Canadian Multiculturalism* (Political and Social Affairs Division, Revised 15 February 1999) [publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/CIR/936-e.htm](http://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/CIR/936-e.htm)

<sup>7</sup> The statistics that follow were drawn from *Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada - National Household Survey 2011*, Statistics Canada, [www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.pdf](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> The 1.61 total fertility rate is referenced to the 2012 World Bank data.

<sup>9</sup> Kevin McQuillan, "All the Workers We Need: Debunking Canada's Labour-Shortage Fallacy," *The University of Calgary School of Public Policy Research Papers*, Vol. 6, Issue 16, May 2013, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

## Multiculturalism is Policy

In 1971, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy. The efforts to create an inclusive Canada are encoded in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*,<sup>11</sup> which protects the rights of diverse groups.

Some countries like Australia have followed while other nations like The Netherlands have reverted back to a non-multicultural policy. Canadians, however, continue to have a positive view of immigration. In a 2006 survey,<sup>12</sup> asking people what made them proud to be Canadian, multiculturalism ranked second only to Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

## Multiculturalism is a Process

Finally, multiculturalism is the process by which racial and ethnic minorities negotiate with central authorities to achieve certain goals and aspirations. The process calls for both sides to find solutions to differences through **reasonable mutual accommodations**, while recognizing that accommodations cannot be made towards differences that violate universal human rights.

### *New Canadian Integration*

- Part of the multicultural process is the integration of immigrants into Canada's social, economic and political life. This Canadian integration model is likened to a **two-way street** – while newcomers adapt to Canadian norms, Canadian society adapts to an increasingly diverse population. For a more comprehensive explanation of the two-way street, please see module 3, section 4.
- Unlike the “assimilate” model, newcomers don't lose or replace their first culture and language. Instead, they adapt by developing their intercultural intelligence in order to work comfortably with Canadians and the other cultures in a multicultural workplace.
- Many of the more public two-way street debates occur at the government level and center on highly contentious issues (e.g. religious symbols in the public sphere).
- In the workplace, the two-way street model happens through open dialogue about differences. It should result in reasonable accommodations by the employer, newcomer, or both.

## Why does Canada accept so many immigrants?

### 1. *The Global Competition for Skilled Immigrants*

- Historically, Canada was part of a small group of nations that accepted immigrants. But that group has widened rapidly as other industrialized nations feel the demographic shifts and the creeping fiscal pressures to support their aging populations and labour markets.
- That means Canada is competing for skilled immigrants with nations like Germany, Sweden, France, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and other OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries.

### 2. *Skilled Immigrants are part of Canada's Economic Engine*

- Over the next two decades, newcomers to Canada will continue to be our primary source of labour force growth<sup>13</sup> in certain sectors, cities and communities.
- Without immigration flow, Canada's population aged between 20 and 44 years old would be declining. The 20 to 44 cohort, which forms most of the labour force, is the one that creates new households, buys new houses, has children and pays the greater part of taxation revenue.

<sup>11</sup> See Government of Canada website, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-18.7/>

<sup>12</sup> Murtaza Hussain, “What the world can learn from Canadian multiculturalism,” Aljazeera, September 16, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/09/2013915111722311111.html> accessed December, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin McQuillan, “All the Workers We Need: Debunking Canada's Labour-Shortage Fallacy,” The University of Calgary School of Public Policy Research Papers, Vol. 6, Issue 16, May 2013, p. 8.

## 2. What are my Rights and Responsibilities in terms of Multiculturalism?

### Rights

Canadian human rights law states no employer shall discriminate against an employee because of race, ancestry, ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, or disability. In the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, the full 11 terms (as listed in the right-hand column) are collectively termed protected grounds (PGs).

### Responsibilities

Employers, employees and coworkers each have responsibilities in terms of accommodating protected grounds.

#### *Employer Responsibilities*

- Create an **inclusive** workplace free from discrimination that respects the dignity of every individual.
- Remove barriers and consider requests for accommodation based on PGs.
- Accommodate PGs to the point of **undue hardship** (please see explanation below).

#### *Employee Responsibilities*

- Inform the employer of their needs for PGs accommodation.
- Understand their rights and responsibilities.
- Comply with workplace rules, regulations, policies and legislation.
- Participate and **cooperate** with the employer to find a workable solution.

#### *Coworker Responsibilities*

- Cooperate with the employer by taking reasonable steps to accommodate an employee's needs based on PGs.
- Help employers create a workplace **free of discrimination**.

### What is Undue Hardship?

Employers are required to accommodate protected grounds to the point of undue hardship. Undue hardship is determined on a case-by-case basis. The factors considered are:

1. Undue financial hardship (e.g. productivity disruptions).
2. Unmanageable disruption to the workforce (e.g. staffing shortages and scheduling challenges).
3. Endangering the health and safety of workers (e.g. wearing head scarves while operating machinery).

#### **On a Case-by-Case Basis**

On a case-by-case basis, Canadian human rights law recognizes that an employer is legally entitled to insist on certain requirements in the form of bona fide occupational requirements (e.g. working safely). Essentially, this means an employer can discriminate based on one of the protective grounds when the nature of the job justifies it. However, it is up to the employer to justify the grounds if challenged.

*Please note: The information listed above is not exhaustive. Stakeholders should consult the relevant legislation or seek professional legal services.*



#### Protected Grounds

Race • National or Ethnic Origin  
• Color • Religion • Age  
• Gender • Sexual Orientation  
• Marital Status • Family Status  
• Disability • A conviction for which a pardon was granted or a record suspended

#### Related Legislation

- *Canadian Human Rights Act*
- *Alberta Human Rights Act*
- *Employment Equity Act*
- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

### 3. What are my Language Rights and Responsibilities?

#### What about an English Only Policy?

Managing language diversity, like other types of diversity, can be complicated. It usually requires an agency to balance competing human interests. Good communication helps people work safely and productively, and a shared language is an important factor in making this happen.

In most parts of Canada, English is the language of work. Yet, applying a unilateral policy like “English only” is usually inconsistent with an agency’s diversity policy. If an agency is committed to a respectful and inclusive workplace that values staff and client diversity, does this logically not include language diversity?

On the other hand, unguided language diversity often results in the opposite, or at best unspoken frustration within teams. Those that speak a language other than English at work are often unaware of the negative reactions of those who cannot understand or participate in the conversation – English speakers as well as other language minority groups. When confronted to “speak English only,” those speakers may also go on the defensive, feeling they are being discriminated against.



*“Where language is not an explicitly protected ground in human rights legislation, it is implicitly protected under the grounds of ancestry, ethnic origin, place of origin, or race.”*

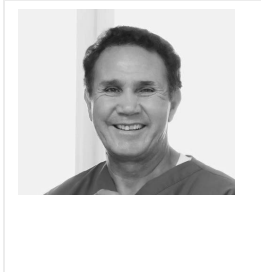
#### Comments on Language Diversity in the Workplace

Read through the comments from different employees about using English. Each has a different, yet equally valid perspective.



##### SAFETY

“If you don’t speak English at work, it **creates a safety hazard** ... I give instructions at our team meetings and a team member who doesn’t speak English very well gives me that look like he doesn’t understand what I am saying. But he doesn’t ask me to explain. And he nods when I ask if he understands. Then he goes away and asks one of his buddies from his country and they both don’t know what is going on. If English is the language of safety then that is the language we need to use all the time. **Being competent at your job is not the same as being safe when you do it.**”



##### CLIENTS

“On the night shift, there are only three employees working – me who speaks English and the other two who talk to each other in their first language all night. It drives me nuts. I find it **offensive** and disrespectful because it excludes me. **Clients complain** about it constantly, saying how are we supposed to know they aren’t talking about us, especially when they say something in their language and laugh.”





### NEW CANADIAN

“I am an immigrant but **I don’t want to work with people who speak my native language** because they always use that language, not English. I came to this country to live here so I want to learn English properly. When I have to work with them, each time they speak in our first language, I feel like it **puts me one step back** in learning English. At work, **I asked for a transfer** from my team to a new team that had no people from my country on it. It is harder on this team. Sometimes I don’t know what people are saying, especially when they talk fast. But it is the right choice for me.”



### RIGHTS

“I need the freedom to feel I can speak my native tongue whenever I want to. **I left my country because I didn’t have freedom.** I came here for this democracy and other freedoms. I lost everything when I left my country. Why should I lose my language too? **It is my right** to speak my first language here, at work or any other place. If English and French are protected languages then my language should also be protected. I feel discrimination if you tell me to only speak English. **You wouldn’t say that to a French employee,** even though you don’t even understand French.”

These different perspectives give way to hard to answer questions such as: “*How much can we require of our immigrant coworkers to speak only English without infringing on their human rights?*” from employers; and, “*When can I speak my first language?*” from non-native speakers.

## How does Canadian Law Deal with Language Rights?

Language is not specified as one of the 11 protected grounds under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. However, it is protected provincially and/or historically in the following ways:

1. **Ontario, Quebec and Yukon** all include language as a protected ground in their human rights codes.
2. **New Brunswick** accepts “language-based” complaints on the basis of ancestry.
3. **Ontario** accepts complaints under the grounds of ancestry, ethnic origin, place of origin and race. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has gone a step further and developed a policy approach<sup>14</sup> that their courts and tribunals use in regards to language-based human rights claims.
4. Although the **Alberta** Human Rights Commission does not have a policy similar to Ontario’s in place, based on the jurisprudence relating to language and human rights discrimination in Alberta, they seem to follow a similar method.
5. In Canadian jurisdictions where language is not a protected ground in human rights legislation, tribunals and courts have protected language through other grounds such as ancestry or place of origin.

<sup>14</sup> See more information at [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-discrimination-and-language/language-related-groundsdiscrimination-ancestry-ethnic-origin-place-origin-race](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-discrimination-and-language/language-related-groundsdiscrimination-ancestry-ethnic-origin-place-origin-race)

## Does an “English Only” Policy Violate Human Rights?

Therefore, an “English only” policy could violate human rights legislation. Since a person’s first language is linked to ethnicity or national origins, a case could be made that an “English only” policy amounts to unlawful discrimination. The policy might be viewed as treating some employees less favourably than others because of their ethnicity or origins.

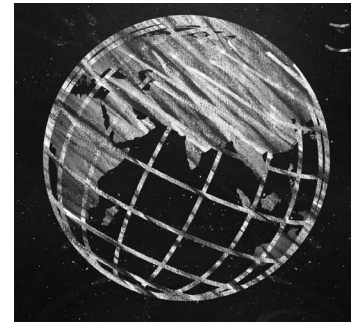
However, as stated, an employer is legally entitled to insist on certain occupational requirements. Essentially, this means an employer can discriminate based on one of the protective grounds to avoid undue hardship. Language is no exception. However, it is up to the employer to justify the grounds if challenged.

### A Better Way

Neither an “English only” policy nor the “any language, any time” approaches are effective long-term solutions for an agency. Instead, employers and each employee need to take responsibility for building an inclusive and respectful workplace.

People need to be aware of their rights as well as their responsibilities. In a democracy, rights and responsibilities do not operate independently of each other. Everyone has rights but it is important to exercise them responsibly to help build an inclusive and respectful workplace culture.

Each person must use judgment and discretion in considering how their needs might affect the needs of others. At a practical level, it means each person considers and, whenever possible, adjusts to the communication needs of those around him or her. This includes those that speak only English and those still learning English.

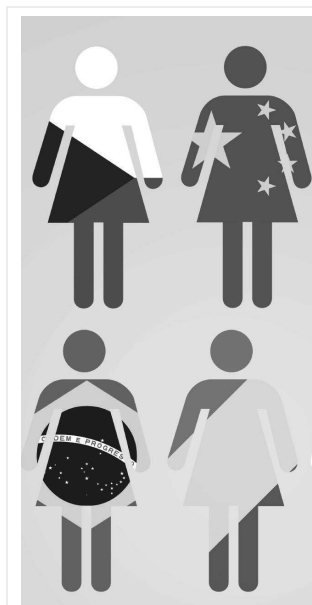


*Section 3 of the Multiculturalism Act states that Canadians will “preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada...”<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> See Government of Canada website, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-18.7/>

## 4. Guidelines for Working with Language Diversity



### Guidelines for **Non-Native Speakers of English**

As a person living in Canada, you have the right to use languages other than English, as well as the responsibility for strengthening your use of English. As you do this, use your discretion (sensitivity, carefulness) and judgment (common sense). You can do the following to make sure others around you feel included and respected:

1. **Switch Back** If you are speaking a language that someone nearby doesn't understand, switch back to English if possible. English is the common language at work. Both English speakers and other English language learners who don't speak your language may be feeling unwelcome or excluded.
2. **Be Aware** If you need a break from speaking English, first take a look around you. Be aware of those you are excluding. If necessary, find a place where you can talk more freely.
3. **Talk with Clients** If you are working with clients who also speak your first language, you could use that first language as part of your service. At the same time, always take a quick look around to see who may not understand that language, including other clients or guardians. Use your discretion and judgment.



### Guidelines for **Native Speakers**

As a native English speaker, you can use discretion and judgment in the following ways to ensure others feel included and respected:

1. **Avoid Assumptions** If you hear people talking in a language you don't understand, don't immediately think they are talking about you or hiding something from you. Normally, English language learners need to take a short mental break in the day to recharge in their first languages. You would need to do the same if you were new to a language.
2. **Adjust** If you are speaking English, and English-language learners are part of the conversation, adjust your language so that they can understand more easily. Slow down a little. Use easier words. Avoid slang. Use common technical language. Help them to feel part of the conversation.
3. **Be Inclusive** Use some of your break times to try including English-language learners in your conversations whenever appropriate.
4. **Check for Comprehension** You already know that just because a second language speaker nods yes, it doesn't mean he or she understands.

## 5. Case Study #2

### Jan Talks about her Rights, Responsibilities and Speaking English

**Linguistically Diverse Team** Jan works as an integrated living practitioner, providing support to a group of clients in a home. Jan works as part of a team of five. Three of the team members are also from Asia and speak the same first language as Jan. The fourth team member was born in Canada and English is her first language. The fifth is from Central America and her first language is Spanish. Jan enjoys the people on her team. Everyone seems to get along well.



**Learning about Rights and Responsibilities** Recently, Jan took a workplace-training course on language and cultural diversity. In the first workshop, they studied their language rights as laid out in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. They also studied the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees, and talked about the use of English as the language of work.

**Being Inclusive** At the end of the workshop, Jan approached the facilitator to say thank you. “Knowing that my first language, and my culture, are protected in Canada’s Multicultural Act has made me feel so good about coming to Canada. I now feel okay using English at work, and less of my first language. I don’t want anyone on my team to feel excluded because they can’t participate in a conversation.”

When Jan arrived the following week for the next workshop, she had more to tell her facilitator. “When I was back at work, I told the coworkers from my first language about our rights and responsibilities. They also had never thought that they might be excluding people because we were the language “majority” on the team. So we started to use English as much as possible – even at lunch. Not because we have to but because we are free to choose to use English.”

Jan went on, “A few days later, at coffee break, my Spanish-speaking coworker said she had noticed we were speaking English and how much she appreciated it. My Canadian coworker agreed. They both said they had felt uncomfortable sometimes when they couldn’t participate in the conversation, but they didn’t feel they should tell people what language to speak.”

**Using Language Diversity** Jan continues to speak her first language to certain clients and guardians from her first culture. She feels she is using her diversity to help them. She is able to explain certain cultural things to them that are harder to communicate in English across a language barrier. She also feels free to use her first language when other language speakers are not around. In other words, she is working with her employer to help create an inclusive workplace where everyone feels welcomed.

#### Essential Skills

**Critical Thinking** Practitioners weigh their employee rights with their responsibilities to decide what is the most effective way to ensure an inclusive workplace.

**Oral Communication** Practitioners discuss work and non-work related issues with coworkers and clients to build team cohesion.

**Decision Making** Practitioners, competent in two or more languages, decide which language to use to talk with clients and coworkers, and ensure others do not feel excluded.

## 6. Review Questions

### Reflection Questions

Complete the following questions independently, with a mentor, or a learning partner or group.

1. What specific rights do you have that could be considered protected grounds?
2. What are the rights under protected grounds of the people you work with and provide a service to?
3. Have you ever felt excluded due to diversity or despite protected grounds? Have you ever caused others to feel excluded in some way?
4. In what ways do you act on your responsibilities? Are there any responsibilities that you could act more fully on?

### Comprehension Questions

Answer the following multiple-choice questions.

1. Why does Canada accept so many immigrants?
  - a) Without immigration, Canada's natural population growth would not be enough to sustain economic growth and welfare.
  - b) Canada is competing for skilled immigrants with nations like Germany, Sweden, France, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and other OECD countries.
  - c) Over the next two decades, newcomers to Canada will continue to be our primary source of labour force growth in certain sectors, cities and communities.
  - d) All of the above.
2. What are responsibilities of employees?
  - a) To cause undue hardship.
  - b) To work with their employers to find a workable solution to accommodate diversity needs.
  - c) To protect their grounds and rights.
  - d) To assimilate into Canadian culture.



### Module 3 Outline

1. What is the Primary Intercultural Skill?
2. Culture and the Potential for Misunderstandings
3. How to Respond to Cultural Differences
4. So, Who Changes?
5. Case Study
6. Review Questions

### Overview

This module explains the ability to suspend judgment as the most important response to cultural differences. It explores the issue of cultural taboos, and sets out three steps for managing potential conflicts. This module will ask you to reflect on who changes on a culturally diverse team. There is a special focus on Canada's "Two-Way Street" model as an approach to resolving differences in the workplace.

### Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, you will be able to:

1. Suspend judgment as the first step in responding to cultural differences.
2. Think in a more in-depth way about whose responsibility it is to change in order to resolve cultural differences.

### Main Point

In the workplace, it is neither the Canadian nor the other cultures' ultimate responsibility to change. Rather, it is more of a give-and-take process that must always take the client, or other core business objectives, into consideration. In general, as Canada becomes more diverse, each citizen should become more comfortable with cultural differences. It begins in the workplace.

# 1. What is the Primary Intercultural Skill?

There are a number of intercultural skills that are essential for culturally diverse teams to develop. For example, you need to be able to recognize that often there are two opposing, yet equally valid, cultural ways of doing things. Also, you need to be able to adapt behaviour to close cultural distance. But the #1 skill is **the ability to suspend judgment**. After you have learned how to suspend judgment, you will be more open to identifying opposing, yet equally valid ways, and adapting to overcome misunderstandings.

# 2. Culture and the Potential for Misunderstandings

The multicultural make-up of the Canadian workplace means that work teams are culturally diverse. Add language diversity to the team and the chances increase significantly for misunderstandings, misattributions and miscommunications. Tensions on culturally diverse teams are common, despite everyone’s best intentions to work well together. Being able to take a mental step back and avoid rush judgments is a key skill.

## Consequences of Cultural Misunderstandings

As a result of cross-cultural tensions, any of the following can occur:

- People get offended when no offense was intended.
- Team members don’t talk to each other, and the clients sense the tension.
- Small disagreements build up and end in big drama that could have easily been avoided.
- Gossip and backstabbing might follow.
- Stereotypes are reinforced in the minds of coworkers.
- People accuse others of discriminations when none occurred.
- Employees ask to move teams, or even quit agencies, and leave the workplace they may have thrived in.

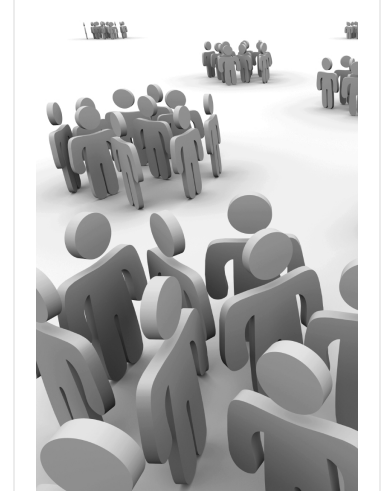
## Examples of Cross-Cultural Misunderstandings

People often blame the conflict on interpersonal differences. Instead, a clash of cultures may be at the root of everything. Read through the three examples below. Each is an example of a cultural taboo that led to misunderstandings. Coworkers took offense instead of first thinking that the differences might be cultural, not personal.

A. **Sweeping Taboo** The Asian member on a team is taking her turn to clean up the kitchen at the client’s home. She wipes down the counter and then starts sweeping the floor. Her West African coworker is also in the kitchen. She is just about to ask him to step aside for a moment so she can finish sweeping when he confronts her angrily. “How dare you be so disrespectful?” She is shocked and asks what she has done. “You were sweeping the garbage towards me. Everyone knows that is an insult. Sweep away from me, or wait until I am finished.”



*The foremost intercultural skill is to “suspend judgment.” When someone says or does something offensive, first take a mental step back. Take emotion out. Then look at the situation. Don’t judge. Ask yourself, “What’s going on? Could it be a cultural thing?”*



- B. **Gesturing Taboo** An African employee is in the library with his Asian coworker and their clients. She is on the other side of the library. He gestures with his hand for her to come over to him. She ignores him. He tries again. Then, he walks over to her and asks why she ignored him. “Because you are so rude! You only call a dog with your hand. Everyone knows that.”
- C. **Complimenting Taboo** A Canadian team member is out in public with her Latino coworker and their clients. The Latino sees an attractive woman. He makes a clucking sound and says to the woman that she looks beautiful. Later, his coworker complains to their supervisor that her Latino coworker is sexually harassing women. The Latino’s response – “Every woman likes compliments, they are like little gems. Everyone knows that.”

### 3. How to Respond to Cultural Differences

Dealing with cultural differences requires knowledge, skill and patience. Generally, the following three steps should be followed:

1. Be aware of cultural differences.
2. Suspend judgment of others.
3. Find reasonable mutual accommodations.

#### Step 1. **Be Aware**

- **Don’t depend on the “just act professionally” option.** As a part of a culturally diverse team, don’t err by assuming that, “As long as I act professionally at work, I don’t need to know anything about culture.” The problem is that “being professional” is culturally defined. For example, being professional for Filipinos or Germans is not the same as for Nigerians, Columbians or Canadians.
- **Avoid the “just be respectful” choice.** Don’t assume that if everyone just treats others with respect, that issues can be avoided. If you review the three previous vignettes (Examples A to C), you will quickly realize what one culture considered respectful, or acceptable, the other didn’t even know about. The golden rule – “treating others as you want to be treated” – must shift to the platinum rule<sup>16</sup> of “treating others as they want to be treated” whenever possible.
- **Scrap the cultural “Dos and Don’ts” list.** “Treating others as they want to be treated” requires some level of awareness of potential differences. When cultural differences first come onto a person’s “radar” they want a list of cultural “Dos and Don’ts.” The Internet has endless variations on that list of cultural taboos. The best advice you can take is to scrap the list. It is too long. Those cultural violations happen too infrequently. And the taboos can change depending on the generation of person you are working with.
- **Choose the better way.** You need to move beyond the surface “Dos and Don’ts” to a more comprehensive grasp of culture built up over time through carefully selected learning and conversations. This handbook is part of building that further understanding. To start, everyone needs to learn to “suspend judgment” before jumping to conclusions.

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<sup>16</sup> The concept of the platinum rule is referenced to Dr. Milton Bennett’s presentation at a 2007 intercultural conference in Edmonton, Alberta.



## Step 2. Suspend Judgment

- **What does Suspend Judgment Mean?** Since nobody can be aware of all the cultural “Dos and Don’ts” that exist in the world, the only realistic solution is that everyone learns to “suspend judgment.” To judge means to put a value on an object or behaviour, to have an opinion of whether it is right or wrong, good or bad. To suspend means to stop or wait somewhere in neutral ground. Therefore, stop and wait in neutral before thinking something is wrong or offensive.
- **Avoid Knee-jerk Reactions.** In the most intense situations, you have to avoid knee-jerk reactions in order to stop offense from taking root and emotions from getting out of control. Have you ever had the doctor tap your knee to check your reflexes? The knee automatically jerks forward. Don’t let your emotions and words jerk forward if you are frustrated by a cultural clash. Keep emotion out of your approach. Even if you are in the right, you might end up saying something for which you will be sorry later.
- **Follow the Process.** When someone says or does something that might be culturally offensive, the best thing to do is to take a mental step back. Suspend judgment. Look at the situation without emotion. Ask yourself “What’s up? Could it be a cultural thing?” Even if it really annoys you, suspend judgment. You might be offended where no offense was intended. It could be a cultural misunderstanding.
- **Build on Similarities.** There is an old saying that goes something like this: *Every person is like no one else, like some people, and like everyone else.* It means we are both similar and different to other people. On a culturally diverse team, it is essential to raise your awareness about differences, while building on similarities. Because of our common humanity, we have similarities even with people from very different cultural backgrounds. Review the three levels of human experience and their examples in Chart 2.

## Step 3. Seek Mutual Accommodations

Cultural differences are always present on a culturally diverse team. Someone or both people have to adapt. This is where the “two-way street” model becomes important; the “process” part of multiculturalism that must be worked out in the workplace.

As mentioned already, the multicultural process calls for all sides to find solutions to differences through **reasonable mutual accommodations**, while recognizing that accommodations cannot be made towards differences that violate universal human rights or mainstream Canadian policies. So how do we decide who ends up changing?

## 4. So, Who Changes?

### Use the Two-Way Street Approach

The Canadian integration model is likened to a **two-way street** – while people from other cultures adapt to mainstream Canadian norms, Canadian society adapts to an increasingly diverse population. In the workplace, the two-way street model happens through open dialogue about differences.



As shown in the previous examples of Cross-Cultural Misunderstandings (A-sweeping, B-gesturing and C-complimenting) the two-way street dialogue is a useful approach not only between Canadian mainstream culture and another culture, but also between other cultures (e.g. African and Asian).

Unfortunately in some scenarios, the cultural behaviours of a person cannot be accommodated. That individual must change because his or her cultural norm is incompatible with Canadian values or policies. But usually, some form of mutual reasonable accommodation is the preferred option for both parties. Look through the explanations in Chart 2 below.

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### Chart 2 The Two-Way Street Approach in Action

#### NO

#### Accommodation



- **Issue** Incompatible differences
- **Explanation** In example C, the Latino team member is advised to change that specific cultural behaviour of clucking towards women because the mainstream Canadian culture cannot accommodate it, even though it wasn't meant to offend or harass. There are workplace policies that prohibit certain interactions with the opposite gender – interactions that could be considered sexual harassment. Workplace policies state there are right and wrong ways to act, and cultural differences have no bearing. Certain policies are mainstream and a legal requirement. Therefore, accommodating such a high-risk cultural difference would be against the law and would create undue financial hardship. There can be no accommodation.

#### MUTUAL

#### Accommodation



- **Approach** Give and take
- **Explanation** In example A, once the West African team member understands that no offense was intended, accommodations can be worked out. Once he realizes that sweeping towards a person is not disrespectful in the Canadian workplace, he can dismiss it the next time it occurs. The Asian coworker remembers the incident. The next time she is working with him, or with another West African from the same culture, she makes every effort to avoid sweeping in that direction. In example B, the cultural difference again calls for give and take. Both parties are aware of the cultural difference, and both respond differently if it reoccurs. The risk of further or bigger issues remains low if both sides accommodate and adapt. There is mutual accommodation.

## 5. Case Study #3

### Achebe, Bo and Ruth Use a Two-Way Street Approach to Figure Out Communication Styles

**Team Friction** Ruth is the community access coordinator at her agency, and she is Achebe’s direct supervisor. Achebe is the team lead. Achebe has been in her role for two months. Together they oversee a team of 15 practitioners.



Bo, one of the practitioners, asks for a private meeting with Ruth, the coordinator. He tells her that many people in the team don’t want Achebe to be their immediate supervisor anymore. Bo explains that the team feels Achebe is angry all the time. She talks in a loud voice. She sounds “bossy”.

**Cultural Misunderstandings** Ruth is not surprised. She suspected there was some tension on the team when two team members asked to move to different jobs. Ruth also knew that Achebe’s manner of communication was cultural. In fact, over the years, Ruth had noticed that many people from Achebe’s first culture communicated in that way. To Ruth, the communication style was assertive, but to Bo, and people from his cultural background, it came across as very aggressive. Ruth believed that both Bo and Achebe were excellent employees. Achebe was actually a very caring person and set high expectations for herself and her team.

**Team Meeting** So, instead of asking Achebe to change her communication style, or for Bo to be more easy-going, Ruth called a team meeting to talk about cultural differences. No one on the team had ever thought that the friction between them could be due to cultural differences. Achebe had no idea that her communication style was being misinterpreted by other cultures. Bo hadn’t noticed that other people from her first culture also had more assertive styles. The team talked about how they could be more sensitive to other cultural styles.

**Two Way Street** Ruth said she would never ask Achebe to change her communication style “because there are Canadians who are loud and very assertive, and I wouldn’t ask them to change. And there are Canadians who are very quiet and unassertive too. As professionals, we all need to use our judgment and adjust if it means a better team and better services to our clients.”

She suggested that everyone consider the Canadian approach to communication, which is somewhere between Achebe’s high assertiveness and Bo’s unassertiveness. Ruth explained that, “Although we need to respect every culture, we also have a responsibility to our clients to be consistent in how we communicate. Since we are in a Canadian workplace, people generally expect a Canadian communication style. However, if a situation calls for a different way of communicating, like working with certain guardians, then you should adapt to that context.”

#### Essential Skills

**Oral Communication** Team leads adapt their communication styles in order to give instructions to team members in a multicultural workplace.

**Working with Others** Practitioners and team leads are responsible for maintaining effective interactions with coworkers and clients in situations requiring coordination of tasks.

## 6. Review Questions

### Reflection Questions

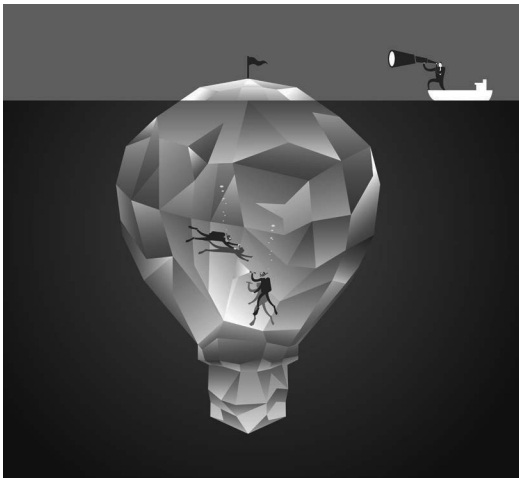
Complete the following questions independently, with a mentor, or a learning partner or group.

1. What are some of the cultural taboos in your first culture?
2. Have you ever taken offense to some behaviour or comment that might have been a cultural misunderstanding?
3. Do you ever need to suspend judgment with clients? Guardians? Coworkers?
4. Is the skill of suspending judgment only useful in cross-cultural encounters, or does it apply in other contexts as well?

### Comprehension Questions

Answer the following multiple-choice questions.

1. Which of the following is true?
  - a) All cultural norms can be accommodated in the Canadian workplace.
  - b) Certain cultural behaviours cannot be accommodated because they are incompatible with Canadian values or policies.
  - c) All cultural norms can be accommodated as long as they are not gender-specific.
  - d) Both A and C
2. When should you suspend judgment?
  - a) When you feel a knee-jerk reaction coming.
  - b) After you check your cultural "Dos and Don'ts" list.
  - c) Before you let negative emotions take control.
  - d) Both A and C



### Module 4 Outline

1. What Does Seeing Below the Waterline Mean?
2. Four Misunderstood Behaviours that Start Below the Waterline
3. How Do I Figure Out What is Going On Below the Waterline?
4. Case Studies
5. Review Questions

### Overview

This module introduces the Iceberg Model as a way to think about culture more deeply. It explores the role of non-verbal communication as one of the main building blocks of culture. This module will ask you to reflect on the non-verbal norms you bring to the workplace and how they impact your relationships with coworkers and clients. There is a special focus on dealing with ambiguity in cross-cultural issues.

### Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, you will:

1. Be more self aware regarding your non-verbal communication norms and how others may or may not understand them.
2. Respond with deeper understanding of the hidden motivations behind norms from smiling and eye contact to volume and degrees of formality.
3. Understand that becoming interculturally competent does not mean you are replacing your first culture.

### Main Point

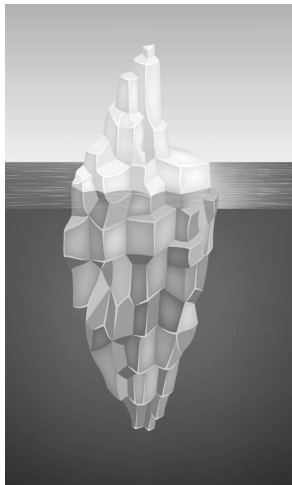
Some people tend to underestimate the effect of cultural differences on a team. When they think about culture, they focus too much on the visible dimension (e.g. food or clothing or rituals). They fail to look at the hidden dimension, below the waterline, where something as “normal” as a smile can have the opposite effect and cause offense in a cross-cultural scenario.

# 1. What does “Seeing Below the Waterline” Mean?

To “see below the waterline” means to recognize and interpret cultural differences correctly. Suspending judgment is the most important intercultural skill. But once you have suspended judgment and taken that all-important mental step backwards, you need to figure out (interpret) what is going on.

The image of an iceberg is a good visual metaphor to understand this. It visualizes the idea of visible and invisible dimensions of culture, and the need to look below the “waterline” to what is hidden and much bigger than what you see above the water. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 **The Iceberg Model**



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## **VISIBLE Dimension**

The parts of culture that we can see. For example: food, clothing, architecture, literature, symbols, holidays, religion and rituals. It includes the words we hear and the behaviours we observe.

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## **INVISIBLE Dimension**

The parts of culture that we cannot see – the intentions of people and their beliefs about:

- Respect
- Rapport
- Time
- Power
- Face
- Communication
- Other<sup>17</sup>

## **The Interaction between Culture’s Visible and Invisible Dimensions**

1. Our deeply held beliefs such as “how” and “who” to show respect to exist in that invisible dimension, **below the waterline**. These hidden beliefs are the forces that create our cultural norms. For example, direct eye contact in some cultures is disrespectful, while in others it is a sign of respect.
2. Those cultural norms, such as respectful eye contact, rise to the surface in the visible dimension as verbal or non-verbal communication and behaviours which cause the cross-cultural misunderstandings between people.
3. Seeing below the waterline means looking past the person’s behaviour and words to the beliefs and intentions.

Consider the following examples of *visible behaviours* that can be shaped by *invisible beliefs*:

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<sup>17</sup> Other building blocks of culture include concepts such as individualism and collectivism, universalism and particularism, masculine and feminine dimensions, the locus of control, tolerance for ambiguity, and risk avoidance. Although these are very important, priority has been given to the concepts discussed in this handbook because they have more immediate application to the sector.

### Workplace Example 1 **TOUCH and Building Rapport**

Abdi and Chen were both participants in a training workshop. Abdi is from the Horn of Africa, and Chen is from China. Although they worked together, and had talked a few times, they didn't know each other very well. So Abdi decided to get to know his coworker better at the coffee break. After a few minutes, as Abdi talked, he touched Chen on the arm. They continued to talk. Abdi did it again, but this time Chen took a step back to regain his personal space, upon which Abdi took a step forward back into that space. The interaction continued throughout the 10-minute break. They "danced" from one side of the room to the other, not realizing cultural differences were at play.



Abdi wasn't intentionally making Chen feel uncomfortable. He was trying to build rapport – make that all-important human connection – in the way he was raised in the Horn of Africa. But touch and stepping into someone's personal space were not the norms in Chen's first culture. Those opposing behaviours in the "visible" dimension were driven by their common desire "below the waterline" to build rapport.

**Who needs to adapt?** Chen needed to step back in his mind, suspend judgment, and ask himself whether cultural differences were at play. Abdi needed to be aware of his non-verbal communication – that what he was actually achieving was the opposite of what he was hoping for. In fact, Chen and some coworkers might end up avoiding Abdi in the future, or taking offense. Both needed to look below the waterline to understand that though rapport is a common desire for all people, the way rapport is built can differ greatly between cultures. Both need intercultural intelligence so that they can suspend judgment and/or adapt, depending on the context they are in.

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### Workplace Example 2 **EYE CONTACT and Showing Respect**

Adam, a Canadian supervisor, interviewed Julien, a Senegalese, who had applied for a job. Adam notes that part way through the interview he had to pause and ask Julien, "Why are you not making eye contact with me?" Adam was uncomfortable asking such an awkward question. He didn't want Julien to be offended. In fact, he thought Julien was a good fit for the team but his lack of eye contact to a supervisor or coworker could easily be misinterpreted.



Julien was surprised by the questions but answered plainly, "Because you are the manager."

His answer isn't surprising. Similar responses might also come from people from Asia or Central and South America.

Adam followed up by asking Julien for a comparison. "What would happen if we were back in Senegal doing this interview, we switch roles, you are the manager and I make steady eye contact?"

"I would think you are very rude. Very arrogant. Like you are challenging me. In Senegalese culture, you must lower your eyes when you talk to someone more powerful or older than you. Especially if you don't know the person well. Avoiding direct eye contact is respectful."

Adam responded. "Well, you should know that looking down or away doesn't translate into respect in Canadian mainstream culture. People will probably interpret it as a lack of confidence. They may think you are disinterested. They may even suspect you are dishonest, hiding or avoiding something. Lack of eye contact stops the trust you are trying to build with the person."

**Who needs to adapt?** In this example, Adam took the time to look below the waterline to try to figure out what was going on. In that job interview situation, Julien needed to adapt to the norm in Canada for speaking with a supervisor, or even an older or more senior coworker. However, both need to be able to adapt their eye contact depending on whom they are working with. For example, a practitioner might avoid steady eye contact with clients with certain disabilities like autism, or with the client's guardians if they're from a certain culture. Both Adam and Julien need intercultural intelligence so that they can suspend judgment or adapt, depending on the context they are in.

## 2. Four Misunderstood Behaviours that Start Below the Waterline



**1. TOUCH** can be one of the most controversial topics in the workplace. In some cultures, men and women don't touch outside of marriage. They don't even shake hands. In other cultures, people will touch a person's arm or hand while talking to emphasize a point or to build better rapport. The degree to which people touch during conversation, or in public, is visible, or above the waterline, but the reasons for doing so are below the waterline.

In a multicultural workplace, the general rule is to avoid touching people unless they initiate socially acceptable touch (e.g. a handshake or pat on the back). You need to notice the boundaries for touch at work and stay within those limits. Other cultures may not have the same habits for touch and personal space as you have in your culture. Watch, learn and adjust.



**2. PERSONAL SPACE** is also a culturally conditioned behaviour used to build rapport and trust between people. When people stand close to you, they are likely trying to engage you in the conversation more, or to show that they are listening. Alternatively, when they step away from you they are implying that you need to respect their personal space.

Religion can also affect the degree to which interactions such as handshakes, eye contact and smiles are acceptable, especially between men and women. This is an essential topic to discuss with a newcomer since touch and personal space can be interpreted as workplace harassment in certain scenarios.



**3. EYE CONTACT** differs from one culture to the next. Some cultures raise children to look someone in the eye as a sign of respect during conversation. They interpret a lack of eye contact as a lack of confidence or even a sign of dishonesty. Other cultures avoid direct eye contact to show respect. They view strong eye contact as a sign of aggression, or too much familiarity with strangers and people in authority.

In Canada, holding eye contact with the person(s) you are talking with is essential to show you are listening. This includes talking with a senior colleague or to a group of people in a meeting. Keeping your eyes down, or not looking people in the eyes, gives the impression you are untrustworthy, disinterested, hiding something, or not confident. You also need to break eye contact about every four or five seconds. Look up, or to the side, as if you are remembering something. Don't stare too long into a person's eyes.



**4. VOLUME** is another culturally defined norm. Every workplace has a preferred noise level of human communication. Listen for it. Notice how loud people tend to speak and adjust your own loudness. In a few cultures, it is important to speak loudly so that people don't think you are talking about them. In some cultures people talk loudly to include others in the conversation. On the other hand, in some cultures, shouting at others from a distance is rude. Some languages are spoken more softly than others.

Listen to find the right volume level and adjust yourself. Also, be aware of when and how speakers take turns and interrupt others. In the Canadian workplace, it is essential to allow others to finish speaking. Learn by observing.



### 3. How do I Figure Out What is Going on Below the Waterline?

Figuring out what is going on “below the waterline” refers to interpreting the cultural behaviours or communication of other people as well as your own. It is not enough to have the right attitude and skills. To know what is going on, and respond appropriately, you need to expand your intercultural knowledge. The following is a suggested outline of four aspects of culture to study, listed in the order that you should approach them.

#### Four Aspects of Culture to Study

**1) Understand the building blocks of culture.**

Intercultural studies begin with the general categories of culture, or the building blocks. This handbook gives a basic introduction to three of these building blocks, namely non-verbal communication (at the end of this module), power distance (module 5), and intercultural communication (module 6), along with a list of resources at the end of the handbook for further study. Once you have a good understanding of these culture-general categories, it is much easier to figure out culture-specific differences when working with people from other cultures.



**2) Become aware of your own cultural background.**

Once people understand the building blocks of culture, most people use their understanding to focus on a specific culture other than their own – one that seems the most different or useful to study in depth. However, it would be more useful to begin with a focus on your own cultural background. For example, if you are Canadian-born, ask yourself what the Canadian norms for power distance or communication are in your workplace.

Edward T. Hall, author of *The Silent Language*, said the following about becoming culturally self-aware:

*“Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own. I am also convinced that all that one ever gets from studying foreign culture is a token understanding. [To study another culture] is to learn more about how one’s own system works.”<sup>18</sup>*



**3) Move into culture-specific study.**

See Appendix C or a list of accessible resources to study more about the building blocks of culture, a specific cultural group, culture related to disabilities, and culture related to workplace integration.



**4) Expand your knowledge into other aspects of diversity.**

A general understanding of personality types can help you to figure out if an issue is rooted in culture or personality or both. It is not uncommon for people to misattribute a personality difference to culture or vice versa. For a deeper understanding of personality types, the following tools are suggested: the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Strengths Development Inventory (SDI) or the Enneagram. See the list of resources in Appendix C to access more information on the tools.

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<sup>18</sup> Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*, (Anchor Books, New York, NY, 1959) p. 29.

## Be comfortable with the ambiguity.

**What is ambiguity?** When something is ambiguous, a double meaning exists. Things are not clear. The issue is not “black or white” but grey. The meaning cannot be resolved according to standard rules or processes.

Dealing with cultural differences requires a high tolerance for ambiguity. Cultural differences are ambiguous because behaviours may have a double meaning. Consider the examples in the handbook so far: cultural taboos on sweeping, gesturing or complimenting others; as well as eye contact, personal space, touch, and the volume of your voice. Each of these cultural differences have opposing behaviours which are acceptable in a particular cultural context; neither is right or wrong.

**What do you see?** The image on the right is a good visual metaphor to explain the ambiguity that is always present in cross-cultural contexts. In the image, there is an old woman and a young woman. The one you see in the picture is the one you are looking for, even though they are both present simultaneously. To see the other one, you need to actively look deeper, or look “below the waterline”. To work comfortably on a culturally diverse team, you need that all-important ability to “hold opposing ideas in your mind at the same time, while still being able to function.” To work comfortably in a multicultural workplace you have to recognize that there can be “conflicting, yet equally valid, cultural perspectives” on what is considered normal.

**Do I retain or replace my culture?** In a multicultural workplace, every employee – those born in and those born outside Canada – has the right to retain their cultural identity. Expanding your intercultural intelligence implies being able to shift both mentally and behaviourally according to the context, without losing your first culture. The multicultural approach requires good intercultural skills, not cultural assimilation.

You already do the mental and behavioural shift – you adapt your approach when working with various disabilities. For example, you adapt your level of eye contact depending on the client’s needs. The ability to be flexible and adapt is already a vital part of the job in the CDSS.



*“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.”*

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

*“Cultural intelligence means recognizing that different, even conflicting, cultural perspectives can be equally legitimate.”*

- Janet M. Bennett

## 4. Case Study #4A

### Samira Confronts Discrimination

**Head Covering** Samira grew up in Canada. She went to school to complete a diploma in community development. She graduated and took a job at an agency as a practitioner working with clients who have developmental disabilities.

Samira wears a head covering as part of her religious beliefs. The head covering is a sign of modesty and a visible expression of her faith. Wearing it is a personal choice and is protected under her religious rights. Although she is part of a religious minority, Canada is a multicultural country, and it is common to see women wearing a head covering in public places from shopping malls to workplaces.

**Misattribution** One of the clients Samira is assigned to complained to Pam, the team coordinator. He didn't want to be assigned to a woman wearing a head covering. When the team leader asked for a reason, the client became highly agitated. He stated, "Women who wear those things on their heads are terrorists." Pam, the team coordinator, was unable to persuade the client otherwise. The client had not only misattributed Samira's headscarf, he was also discriminating against her as part of a minority group. Pam met with the client's guardians but nothing changed.

**Complex Issue** Pam explained the difficult situation to Samira. As a coordinator, she said, "I need to tell you that the client's behaviour is clearly discriminating against your faith and cultural background. Our agency in no way supports the behaviour. In fact, I value the diversity you and others bring to the agency because it expresses the reality of our community." However, because clients play a part in choosing their support worker, they can refuse to work with certain persons if the pairing is uncomfortable to them. Furthermore, the client's disability made it difficult to persuade him to give Samira the respect and dignity that the agency gave to everyone. Pam asked Samira if she had any suggestions.

**Suspending Judgment** Samira did not overreact and said, "Let the client work with whomever he feels the most comfortable with. I will wait for the right opportunity to show him differently." Her reaction took a lot of internal strength and confidence. Samira suspended judgment when she had every right to feel upset. A person she was assigned to support and prevent from being discriminated against due to a disability was discriminating against her.

**Apology** Samira waited a few months for the right opportunity. She continued to be friendly to the client. Then an opportunity emerged to change the client's attitude. The client wanted help with a task on the computer. On that shift, Samira was the only one on the team who knew how to do it. She spent the morning working with the client. Later, he came and apologized to her for saying she was a terrorist. "You are a nice person," he added, and asked if she would continue to be his support person. This case study shows that suspending judgment doesn't mean ignoring issues or being passive; rather, it means responding in a way that sooner or later resolves differences instead of escalating them.



#### Essential Skill

**Problem Solving** Practitioners need to find ways to build strong working relationships with clients. They sometimes have to find creative solutions to overcome a client's distrust of them, even when those reasons are clearly unjustifiable.

## 4. Case Study #4B

### Alison and Sandra Disagree over Work Ethic

Alison and Sandra are part of a team that provides support to clients with complex needs. During a few highly stressful days, when a client needed around-the-clock support, an argument occurred between them. A coworker, Jean, had told Sandra she had overheard Alison complaining to other team members about her work ethic. Sandra confronted Alison, and asked her to explain her negative comments on her work ethic.



**Conflict** Alison said she didn't want to offend, but she felt Sandra spent more time talking than working, and that when she did work she was slow, and held the rest of the team up. Sandra was deeply offended and complained to their supervisor. The supervisor met first with Alison and then with Sandra to hear their views.

**Alison** explained the issue this way: "To me, Sandra is lazy. She is more interested in talking to team members than getting the work done. But to be honest, most people from her culture are like that. They prefer to talk and laugh instead of doing their job. I have worked on other teams with people from her culture and they are all like that. They are not hardworking. When I do my job, I take pride in doing it properly without mistakes. That is why I prefer to work with people from my culture."

**Sandra** explained the issue this way: "I like everyone on my team, including Alison, but questioning my work ethic is very disrespectful. It is very important to me that I get along with everyone on my team. I want everyone to feel appreciated and valued, and that is why I talk to people. I want my team to feel like family. Our workplace is often stressful. We need to feel free to laugh and talk to each other to ease the tension. When I look at Alison, and actually some people from her culture, they work hard but they are very cliquey. They never talk to other people. They always sit together. It is like they think they are better than everyone else."

**Debrief** The main source of tension in this conflict is happening "below the waterline", where identities, meanings and values exist. Sandra places human relationships and friendly communication at a higher level than Alison, who in turn places a higher value on working hard together to get the job done. Neither of them was able to recognize that they both valued relationships but went about building them differently – Alison through working together and Sandra through conversation with others. They were unable to suspend judgment and look below the waterline to their common needs to build relationships and to work hard. They needed intercultural intelligence to recognize and adjust to each other's needs.

#### Essential Skills

**Working with Others** Practitioners work in teams. They coordinate their tasks with other practitioners and client networks. They are responsible for maintaining effective interactions with a few others in situations requiring coordination.

**Oral Communication** Practitioners interact with others to plan tasks and to build team rapport.

## 5. Review Questions

Complete the following questions independently, with a mentor, or a learning partner or group.

### Reflection Questions Becoming Culturally Self-Aware in Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is one of the main building blocks for understanding cultural differences in the workplace. As this module has shown, culture can have a significant impact on how people communicate non-verbally. Read through the chart below. The LESS and MORE columns are lists of cultural opposites.

- Do a self-assessment by answering the following question: What are your preferred non-verbal communication norms? Check the box (✓).

**Chart 3 Cultural Opposites in Non-Verbal Communication**

	LESS		MORE
<b>SMILING</b>	<p>A smile is a sign of personal regard (affection, opinion, esteem), or an honest reflection of your good mood. It is not an essential part of greeting or communicating.</p> <p>A smile is only for people you know; you don't smile at strangers.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Smiling is a sign of respect and politeness. It promotes friendly relations. It is an essential part of greeting and communicating. A smile is an unwritten social obligation that "greases the wheels" of human interaction. You can smile at strangers if it puts them at ease.</p>
<b>EYE CONTACT</b>	<p>You should limit eye contact with others to show respect, especially to people with more seniority or power than you.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>You should maintain eye contact with the person you are talking with. It shows you are listening.</p>
<b>PERSONAL SPACE</b>	<p>You should always be close enough to people to touch them. It is part of being personable – closing the personal distance. You touch people on the arm or hand to emphasize a talking point.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>You should aim to keep at least an arm's distance between yourself and other people. You need to respect other people's personal space. You rarely touch people when you talk to them.</p>
<b>VOLUME</b>	<p>Talk loud enough so that the listener can hear you.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Talk loud enough so that everyone can hear you. It shows confidence.</p>
<b>SILENCE</b>	<p>Silence is uncomfortable. You need to fill the silence with conversation. When someone asks a question, you should answer promptly.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Silence is part of communication. Respect and politeness mean waiting until you are asked or spoken to. Silence before answering shows you are thinking carefully before you talk.</p>
<b>DEGREE OF FORMALITY</b>	<p>Gestures and communication between people should be informal and on a first name basis.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Your gestures and body language (e.g. bowing) should show respect. This may also require the use of titles and other formal verbal communication.</p>

2. Do a workplace assessment. What are the non-verbal communication norms of your workplace? Mark the box with an X. Do the norms tend to be more to the left column, or to the right?
3. Do any of your coworkers (in your multicultural workplace) demonstrate norms that are different to the expected norms?

## Comprehension Questions

Answer the following multiple-choice questions.

1. Which of the following is true about the Iceberg Model?
  - a) Our deeply held beliefs exist in the invisible dimension, below the waterline, as the forces that create our cultural norms.
  - b) Our hidden cultural norms surface in the visible dimension as communication and other behaviours.
  - c) Seeing below the waterline means looking past the person's behaviour and words to the beliefs and intentions to avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings.
  - d) All of the above.
  
2. Which of the following is true about the four aspects of culture that help you see what's going on "below the waterline"?
  - a) First learn about specific cultures (e.g. Chinese, British).
  - b) First learn about the main cultural building blocks.
  - c) You should learn about your own cultural background last.
  - d) You should never learn about other aspects of diversity (e.g. personality types because they will confuse things).



### Module 5 Outline

1. What is Power Distance?
2. Egalitarian and Hierarchical Cultures
3. Mental Models of Power
4. The Canadian Approach to Power
5. Power in the Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship
6. Case Studies
7. Review Questions

### Overview

This module explains the concept of power distance as one of the main building blocks of culture. It explores the role of power in hierarchical and egalitarian cultures and how it shapes behaviours. This module will ask you to reflect on the mental model of power you bring to your team. There is a special focus on the Canadian value of equality and how it shapes Canadian concepts of power.

### Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, you will be able to:

1. Identify and interpret low and high-power distance behaviours in the workplace.
2. Understand the underlying principle of equality in the Canadian workplace.

### Main Point

In the multicultural workplace, it is essential to understand the culturally polar views that people can bring about how power should be gained and used. Compared with many other cultures, Canada has a very low-power distance culture. There is a closer sense of equality between coworkers than there is in some other cultures. As a result, leaders expect much more active participation and independent thinking from employees at every level of the agency.

# 1. What is Power Distance?

Power distance relates to the degree of equality between employees, for example, between supervisors and frontline employees. Workplace cultures are defined by one of the following power structures: low-power distance cultures have an **egalitarian** structure, and high-power distance cultures have a **hierarchical** structure.

## 2. Egalitarian and Hierarchical Cultures

### Egalitarian

- In **low-power distance** cultures (egalitarian), people do not believe inequalities in power are natural. Instead, employees and leaders *think of each other as equals*.
- As a result, the hierarchical system is only an **inequality of job roles**, convenient for getting work done. In the egalitarian work system, people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities.
- Power is much more **fluid**. Employees are expected to step up and lead at appropriate moments. Roles can be changed – someone who is my subordinate today might be supervising me in the near future.
- The **emotional distance** between the leadership and employees is small. Employees are comfortable approaching and contradicting the leaders.
- Employees **expect to** contribute to team decision-making. They are expected to show initiative, problem solve, and make many decisions independently.

### Hierarchical

- In **high-power distance** cultures (hierarchical), people accept that inequalities in power are normal.
- The power distance could be between roles, ages, education levels, genders etc.
- Superiors and subordinates *think of each other as unequal*. In a hierarchical system, **people are not equal**, and therefore they do not get the same rights and opportunities.
- Power is **centralized** with a few people. There is a clear chain-of-command. For example, a worker reports directly to the immediate supervisor, who reports to the manager, who reports to a senior leader, who reports higher up the chain-of-command.
- The **emotional distance** between subordinates and leaders is large. Subordinates are less comfortable approaching and contradicting their superiors, sharing ideas and making independent decisions.
- Contact between superiors and subordinates is supposed to be initiated by the superior. Subordinates **expect** to be told what to do.





## Hofstede's Power Distance Index

The most famous study to measure power distance between cultures was done by Geert Hofstede. He measured the power distance of IBM employees in over 50 countries. Chart 4 from Hofstede's Power Distance Index (PDI) lists 34 countries in order from the most hierarchal to the most egalitarian.

### Hofstede's PDI Tool

The higher the score, the more hierarchical the workplace culture. The lower the score the more egalitarian the workplace culture.

### The Limits to Hofstede's Tool

Hofstede's PDI numbers are not an exact science. They are relative, not absolute positions of countries. Using them to understand culture, one must take into account other factors (e.g. economy, history, personalities, and coincidences). Also, cultures change over time, especially between generations. Hofstede's PDI tool is a good starting point to predict how a person from a culture might act in terms of power distance.

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**Chart 4** Hofstede Power Distance Index Values

Country	Score	Country	Score
Guatemala	95	Peru	64
Philippines	94	East Africa	64
Russia	93	Korea	60
Romania	90	Iran	58
Mexico	81	Pakistan	55
Venezuela	81	Canada Quebec	54
Arab Countries	80	Argentina	49
China	80	South Africa	49
India	77	United States	39
West Africa	77	Canada	39
Vietnam	70	Netherlands	38
Brazil	69	Australia	36
France	68	Germany	35
Hong Kong	68	Great Britain	35
Poland	68	Ireland	28
Columbia	67	Israel	13
Turkey	66	Austria	11

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Adapted from Geert Hofstede, <http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>, accessed January 2014, and from Geert Hofstede and Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations - Software of the Mind* (McGraw-Hill, 2005), p. 43.

Read the two workplace examples that follow. Each example gives a perspective on how cultural understandings of power can affect communication and behaviour on a multicultural team.

#### Workplace Example 1 **The DIRECTOR'S VISIT**

Lee works as part of the community outreach team at a large agency. She came to Canada as a temporary foreign worker, but later transferred into the provincial nominee program. She wants to become a Canadian citizen. She enjoys her work at the agency because it is similar to the work she did in her country of origin. She has been at the agency a few weeks and has become good friends with Amelia, a Canadian on her team.

One morning at work, Lee asks Amelia if their team has done anything wrong. Amelia was surprised. "I don't think so," she responded. "Why do you ask?" Lee then asked if Amelia knew of anything that she might have done wrong with a client. Again, Amelia said no and said, "Lee, you need to tell me what is wrong."

Lee looked extremely worried. "Didn't you see? The director of our agency is visiting our room." Amelia looked across the community outreach room to where the director was talking with some clients and practitioners. "A leader only visits the workers at our level when we have made a mistake. He is too important to waste his time in our area unless he needs to fix a problem. I know we are all in trouble."

Amelia was startled. She had no idea why Lee would come to that conclusion about the director's visit. Lee had grown up in a more hierarchical cultural background in which senior leaders rarely mingled with employees. Amelia had to explain to Lee that in the Canadian workplace the work of leaders is not seen as more important than the work of other employees. She also said that leaders should mix with people at all levels of an agency in order to have first-hand experience of the challenges and opportunities in the organization.



#### Workplace Example 2 **TITLES**

John Olsen is a supervisor. Henry Santos is on his team. John says that Henry has been in Canada for a few years and has been working with him since he immigrated.

John insists that his staff calls him by his first name; however, Henry still calls him Mr. Olsen. In fact, a lot of immigrant workers from Africa, Asia and Latin America call him "Mr. Olsen" or "boss" or even "Mr. John". Henry says Mr. Olsen is the supervisor and a supervisor must be respected.

John says he is uncomfortable with any title. He feels that being called "boss" creates a kind of unhealthy distance between him and his team. As if he is above them. "I want to be on a first name basis with everyone. I want to feel I am working alongside my team, not over them." John wants to close the distance between Henry and himself. He has told Henry that if he really wants to respect him then he should call him by his first name. John wonders if he should start calling Henry "Mr. Santos" when he calls him Mr. Olsen.



### 3. Mental Models of Power

Mental models are the understandings we carry around in our heads about how things work in the world. Our mental models of power are shaped by our social experiences in family, school, community and culture. We carry these mental models into the workplace to help us make sense of how people get power; increase or maintain power; and use, share, or lose power.

Think about the following questions as you read the chart below:

1. Which type of society did you grow up in, more low-power or more high-power distance oriented?
2. What mental models of power have you inherited from the society you were raised in? Think in terms of the six dimensions in the chart.
3. Is there a difference between how your grandparents, parents and you view power through the six dimensions?

**Chart 5** Key Differences between Low-Power Distance (LPD) and High-Power Distance (HPD) Societies

6 DIMENSIONS	LPD Societies	HPD Societies
<b>1. Inequalities</b>	Should be minimized whenever possible.	Should be wanted, expected and accepted.
<b>2. Relationships</b>	Social relationships should be managed carefully. There is interdependence between less and more powerful people.	Status should be balanced with restraint. Less powerful people are dependent on more powerful people.
<b>3. Parents</b>	Treat children as equals.	Teach children obedience.
<b>4. Children</b>	Treat parents and older relatives as equals. Have no role in the old-age security of parents.	Respecting parents and older relatives is a lifelong value. Children are a source of old-age security to parents.
<b>5. Students</b>	Treat teachers as equals.	Give teachers respect, even outside class.
<b>6. Teachers</b>	Are experts who transfer objective facts. Expect initiative from students. Quality of learning depends on two-way communication and the excellence of students.	Are gurus who transfer personal wisdom. Take all the initiative in class. Quality of learning depends on the excellence of the teacher.

Adapted from Geert Hofstede and Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations - Software of the Mind* (McGraw-Hill, 2005), p. 57.

## 4. The Canadian Approach to Power

### Canada's Culture is Egalitarian

Most Canadian organizations operate on an egalitarian model. They have low-power distance workplace cultures. Even sectors like the armed forces, law enforcement and health care, which are traditionally more hierarchical, tend to have lower power distances than their counterparts in other cultures. **In the Canadian approach, hierarchy at work is only an inequality of roles, not people.** A workplace hierarchy is good only for getting work done effectively and efficiently. It serves no other social purpose.



### The Canadian Multiculturalism Act and Our Core Values

Many factors have helped to form Canada's culture, including geography, economy, political, history, and cultural heritages. This includes the Aboriginal, French, English and many other immigrant groups. Today, at the center of Canadian culture, are the triple values of *equality*, *freedom* and *responsibility*.

Equality • Freedom • Responsibility



These three values have a direct effect on how Canadians view power. These three are the “cogs” upon which most of our mainstream cultural norms turn – everything from the way we talk to supervisors and colleagues to the laws and policies we defer to. These three values are encoded in the Preamble to *The Canadian Multiculturalism Act* that states:

- All Canadians enjoy equal status (equality)
- And are entitled to the same rights, powers and privileges (freedom)
- As well as being subject to the same obligations, duties and liabilities (responsibility)

At the same time, this is an aspiration, not yet a full achievement. As individuals and as a society, we are still working hard to get to the point where we can say Canadians embody equality, freedom and responsibility.

Read through Chart 6. It lists seven dimensions of equality that must be practiced in the Canadian workplace. Each is closely associated with organizational policies about “respect in the workplace”. Each of the seven can be a root cause of cultural misunderstandings in the workplace. The list is not exhaustive.

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**Chart 6** Seven Dimensions of Equality in the Canadian Workplace

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<b>1. Gender</b>	Men and women treat each other as professional equals. For example, men treat female supervisors and team members as equals, unless there is a good biological reason to treat them differently (e.g. physical strength for a specific task). Also, women don't take on job tasks, on behalf of male coworkers, just because the tasks are associated with a woman's role in a specific culture.
<b>2. Generation</b>	Younger and older workers treat each other as equals. Being older doesn't mean a coworker has more or less authority, or that younger workers should defer decisions to the older person.
<b>3. Leading</b>	Subordinates don't avoid supervisors but rather speak up, contribute their ideas and expect to be consulted, especially in decisions that have a direct effect on them.
<b>4. Ethnicity</b>	People respect coworkers from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. They don't stereotype others, or give or deny others a specific job because of their ethnic or racial backgrounds. They make every effort to let go of long-held tribal or ethnic disputes that occurred in their countries of origin.
<b>5. Culture</b>	Coworkers practice intercultural mindfulness (i.e. they suspend judgment), they can talk to each other about cultural differences without taking offense, and they adapt their cultural norms when possible to help others feel respected and included.
<b>6. Language</b>	Employees use English whenever possible. They avoid speaking other languages when coworkers who don't understand are in the room, even at break times if necessary, so that others feel included. At the same time, other people don't get offended when other languages need to be spoken for other work-related purposes.
<b>7. Disability</b>	People with disabilities are treated as equals.

## 5. Power in the Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship

In a multicultural workplace there are a variety of beliefs about how power should work between leaders and subordinates.

Certain Asian, African, Latin American, and European cultures have different expectations as to how supervisors and subordinates should interact in terms of power distance. This is also true for cultures that might seem close to Canadian workplace culture, such as American, Australian or British. In other words, it doesn't matter where you originate from, you need to understand cultural differences about the power if you are going to succeed in your workplace. Even if you are familiar with Canada's more egalitarian leadership style, you might work with people who are not.

Think about the following questions as you read the chart below:

1. Which power distance approach to leadership are you most familiar with?
2. Have you noticed behaviours in your workplace that might be attributed to a high-power distance approach to leadership?

**Chart 7** Summary of Power Differences between Leaders and Subordinates

EGALITARIAN	HIERARCHICAL
<b>Leaders</b>	
Ask subordinates	Tell subordinates
Are called by first names	Are called by their titles
Enable people	Manage people
Expect collaboration	Make the decisions
<b>Subordinates</b>	
Have a lot of influence in decision-making	Don't question leaders' decisions
Question decisions respectfully	Rarely disagree, never publicly
Take initiative	Seldom take initiative and usually defer to supervisor
Find or ask what to do next	Wait to be told what to do
Use technical and soft skills to get promoted	Depend on technical skills and supervisors for promotion
Need to be flexible in their career, open to new opportunities and new employers	Need to have fewer career desires and be loyal to an organization

## 6. Case Study #5A

### Sisay and Naomi Clash over Gender Roles

Sisay and Naomi worked as part of a three-person team in a client's home. The team had many duties to keep the client's house clean and tidy. The team was supposed to share all the duties on the schedule. But this is not what happened.

**Issue** Sisay refused to do certain house duties. He told Naomi that, "Those jobs are for women to do, not men." But he also said, "I will do the work that requires more physical strength because I am a man." But Naomi knew she could do any of the tasks in the house and had never needed to ask someone physically stronger than her for help. When she asked Sisay what work he was talking about, he told her not to be disrespectful.

Naomi felt uncomfortable with the situation, but she was unsure what to do. The third team member, Tom, was a Canadian. When Naomi asked Tom if he felt the work roles were fair, he said he didn't want to offend anyone. He said Naomi should be more flexible because of Sisay's cultural differences.

**Dilemma** Naomi's family came to Canada with her family when she was a girl. She originated from the same part of the world as Sisay. Although she grew up in Canada, her parents still followed certain norms from their culture. Naomi felt awkward about confronting Sisay on his ideas about work roles because he was older than her. She didn't want to be disrespectful but she also knew that in the Canadian workplace, no one was allowed to discriminate against her because of her gender. She was becoming very unhappy being on her team. Naomi told her coordinator about her dilemma and asked for a transfer to a new house team. Meanwhile, a new female practitioner joined the house team with Sisay. She insisted on equal distribution of duties. Sisay agreed. However, he still avoided the work he believed was for a woman by increasing his other work in the house. The tension began to grow in the client's home.

**Action** A team meeting was scheduled with the coordinator who explained the agency's policy of equality. As an employer, the agency needed to create an inclusive workplace free from discrimination that respects the dignity of every individual, male and female. Sisay's role was to help his employer create that discrimination-free workplace. Some weeks later, Sisay resigned from the job. He felt the agency had discriminated against his culture.

**Lessons.** In this example, neither Sisay nor Naomi was able to change their cultural norms. Naomi was unable to confront an older male from her culture. Instead, she chose to avoid conflict by moving to another house team. What will she do if a similar cultural difference occurs again?

Sisay was unable to reinvent his mental model of gender roles. Although cultural rights are protected under Canadian law, they still need to be consistent with other human rights law; in this case, gender equality. In the future, Sisay will likely need to work with other women. What will he do if he finds himself on a team with a female supervisor? Cultural "wiring" is not always an easy thing to change. Nevertheless, adapting is a responsibility we all must share as part of the multicultural experience.



#### Essential Skill

**Working with Others** Practitioners work in small house teams. They are responsible for carrying out house cleaning duties within established routines and assigned tasks.

## 6. Case Study #5B

### Gloria Uses Initiative to Problem Solve

Gloria came to Canada from the Caribbean. She wasn't able to continue working in her first career so she transferred her skills into the disability services sector. She qualified as a practitioner and works at an agency with clients with developmental disabilities. Joan was one of Gloria's first clients.



Joan had asked to go to the public swimming pool. Gloria and Joan went by bus from the agency, along with a small group of other clients and practitioners. The time was 10:45 a.m. by the time they were swimming in the pool. The clients had 45 minutes to swim. They needed to be out of the pool by 11:30 a.m. and changed by 12 p.m. in order to catch the 12:15 p.m. bus back to the agency.

At 11:30 a.m. Gloria said, "It is time to get changed and catch the bus. We should get out of the pool now, Joan." Joan told Gloria she wanted to continue swimming. She was enjoying swimming too much to get out the pool. Gloria asked her a second time, using more persuasive language, "If we don't get out now Joan, we will miss the bus." But she refused and became agitated. All the other clients were already getting changed.

Gloria didn't know how to get Joan out of the pool without causing an incident. She didn't know what to do. She didn't want to get caught in a "power play" with her client, which would lead to her having to use strong, directive word choices, which would in turn lead to restrictive measures, an incident report and an adjustment to Joan's personal plan.

She was alone and was becoming very stressed. She thought to phone her supervisor for help and ask, "I don't know how to get my client out of the pool without causing an incident. What must I do?" Gloria came from a workplace cultural background in which a large power distance existed between her and her supervisor. Therefore, it would have been appropriate for her not to use as much initiative and instead defer to her immediate supervisor. In the Canadian workplace, employees are encouraged to use their initiative as much as possible.

But instead, Gloria kept her emotions down by saying, "I can do this. I can find a solution myself." So Gloria problem solved. She brainstormed ways to persuade Joan to climb out of the pool. A few minutes later, the idea arrived in her head.

Gloria reminded Joan that everyone else had climbed out and that she was now alone in the pool. Joan didn't like being alone in the pool and climbed out. Gloria decided that the next time they went to the pool, she would make sure they had at least an extra 30 minutes for Joan to swim.

#### Essential Skill

**Problem Solving** Practitioners are unable to accommodate certain requests from clients who may in turn refuse to cooperate with planned activities. They explain the reasons to the client. They first try to find ways to persuade the client to change their minds, before contacting their immediate supervisors for help.



## 7. Review Questions

### Reflection Questions Becoming Culturally Self-Aware in Power Distance

Power distance is one of the main building blocks for understanding cultural differences in the workplace. As this module has shown, culture can have a significant impact on behaviours. Read through the chart below. Each dimension is made up of a pair of opposites on a 1 to 5 continuum in the middle.

1. Do a self-assessment by answering the following question: What are your preferred power distance norms? Mark where you believe you lie in the continuum between 1 and 5.

**Chart 8 Comparison Between Canadian and High-Power Distance Workplace Cultures**

Power in the Canadian Workplace		High-Power Distance Cultures	
<b>Equality</b>			<b>Inequality</b>
People see inequalities in power as man-made and artificial. It is not natural, although it might be convenient and quicker when some have more power than others.	1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5		People accept that inequalities in power are natural. They believe that some people will have more power than others in the same way they accept some people are taller and others shorter.
<b>Delegate</b>			<b>Control</b>
Those with power tend to deemphasize it. They try to minimize the differences between themselves and subordinates. They delegate and share power whenever possible.	1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5		Those with power emphasize it. They don't share it. They are, however, expected to look after subordinates.
<b>Question</b>			<b>Obey</b>
Leaders expect everyone to contribute their ideas and expertise, to speak up when a mistake is going to be made, or even challenge decisions respectfully through suggestions or questions.	1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5		Employees might show respect to a superior by not questioning decisions, requests, orders or instructions.
<b>Show Initiative</b>			<b>Defer</b>
Subordinates are expected to show initiative – to think critically, problem solve and make decisions. Employees are not closely supervised and they have a lot of influence in decisions	1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5		Leaders make most decisions. Subordinates are closely supervised. Subordinates defer many decisions to that supervisor. They rarely disagree with their supervisor or speak up when the supervisor is wrong.
<b>Informal Respect</b>			<b>Formal Respect</b>
Supervisors are known by their first names.	1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5		They might use titles when speaking to their supervisors, or call them "boss". Their first language will include specific words to show respect to a senior.
<b>Interdependence</b>			<b>Dependence</b>
The supervisor-subordinate relationship is often one of interdependence.	1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5		The supervisor-subordinate relationship is often one of dependence.

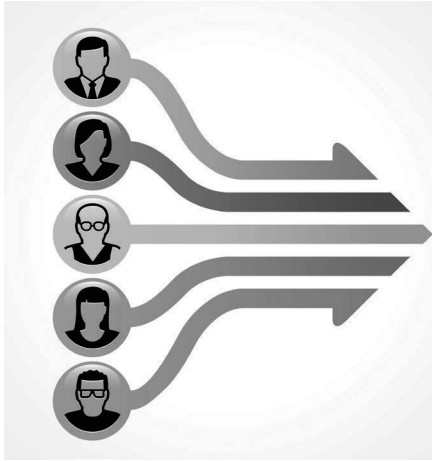
Adapted from Geert Hofstede and Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations - Software of the Mind* (McGraw-Hill, 2005), p. 59, and from Craig Storti, *Figuring Foreigners Out* (Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999), pgs. 130-141.

2. Do a workplace assessment. What are the power distance norms of your workplace? Mark it on the continuum between 1 and 5. Do the norms tend to be more to the left column, or to the right?
3. Do any of your coworkers (in your multicultural workplace) demonstrate norms that are different to the expected norms?

## Comprehension Questions

Answer the following multiple-choice questions.

1. Which one of the following is a cultural norm in the Canadian workplace?
  - a) Everyone is welcome to contribute his or her ideas and expertise in meetings.
  - b) Employees show respect to a superior by not questioning decisions, requests, order or instructions.
  - c) People speak up when a mistake is going to be made, or even challenge leadership decisions respectfully through suggestions or questions.
  - d) Both A and C
  
2. Which one of the following is true about cultural norms for power in the Canadian workplace?
  - a) Leaders make most decisions.
  - b) Employees are expected to show initiative – to think critically, problem solve and make decisions.
  - c) Subordinates defer many decisions to their supervisor.
  - d) Employees rarely disagree with their supervisor, or speak up when the supervisor is wrong.



### Module 6 Outline

1. What is Intercultural Communication?
2. The Seven Continuums
3. Managing Face
4. Dealing with Mistakes in the CDSS
5. Case Studies
6. Review Questions

### Overview

This module explains the role of communication as one of the main building blocks of culture. It explores seven different continuums of communication that culture can affect. This module will ask you to reflect on how you communicate. There is a special focus on the concept of “face” and dealing with mistakes in the CDSS.

### Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, you will be able to:

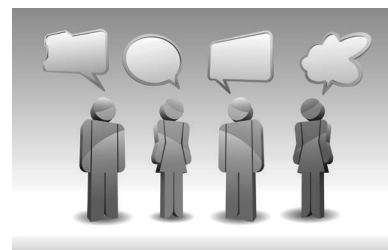
1. Identify, interpret and adapt to various intercultural communication styles.
2. Manage mistakes with confidence and view them as learning opportunities.

### Main Point

Strong communication skills include the ability to recognize and adapt to alternative styles of speaking, especially in a multicultural workplace. It also means being sensitive about how you communicate mistakes made by others and admitting to your own mistakes.

# 1. What is Intercultural Communication?

Intercultural communication is one of the most complex building blocks of culture. Intercultural communication focuses on the words we choose, why we choose them, and how we sequence them.



# 2. The Seven Continuums

Intercultural communication can be organized into at least seven continuums. Each continuum explains two complete opposites (e.g. direct versus indirect communication). Everyone communicates using both opposites depending on the context. However, each culture also tends to use one more than the other. For example, Northern Europeans are often characterized as more direct in their communication than Asians or Latinos, while Canadians tend to be somewhere in the middle.

Think about the following questions as you read through columns A and B:

The two columns are lists of cultural opposites. What are the preferred communication norms of your workplace? Do the norms lean more to the left column, or to the right?

**Chart 9** Intercultural Communication Continuums

Column A		Column B
<b>LINEAR</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>CIRCULAR</b>
I talk in a straight line. I get to the point quickly. My points are explicit and stay on topic. I am efficient, time-focused. I am clear, concise and coherent.	1--2--3--4--5	I talk around the point. The point is implicit. I may move on and off the main topic as I develop the context for you. I might include personal stories and seemingly irrelevant details; however, every detail occurs within a bigger context that you need to understand first.
<b>EMOTIONALLY DETACHED</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED</b>
I separate myself from the issues. I am objective and work with little emotional connection. If something is important, it shouldn't be distorted by personal feelings.	1--2--3--4--5	If it's important, I am both intellectually and emotionally engaged. If it's worth being passionate about, I should express that feeling. If I have an interest in the outcome, how could I separate myself from it?
<b>LOW SELF-DISCLOSURE</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>HIGH SELF-DISCLOSURE</b>
I keep my personal life mostly separate from my work life. I build rapport with colleagues as we work together to accomplish a task. I prefer to keep most of my personal information to myself. Building very close friendships at work usually takes time.	1--2--3--4--5	I talk a lot at work about my personal life. Other people have life lessons that can help me in my life. By being more open about our lives, we build rapport together.

Adapted from Geert Hofstede and Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations - Software of the Mind* (McGraw-Hill, 2005), p. 59, and from Craig Storti, *Figuring Foreigners Out* (Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999), pgs. 130-141.

## Chart 9 Intercultural Communication Continuums

Column A		Column B
<b>DIRECT</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>INDIRECT</b>
I mean what I say. I say what I mean. Yes means yes. "Saving face" is not important. Don't be offended – it's not personal – it's just work. To be frank is to be respectful of the facts and to avoid confusion, or avoid misleading you.	1--2--3--4--5	I suggest. I imply. So "read between the lines" and watch my body language as well. Yes could mean maybe or no. "Saving face" is important – it keeps our reputations intact and maintains harmony.
<b>DIRECTIVE</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>PERSUASIVE</b>
I use a more authoritative style for giving tasks to subordinates. I use clear orders (e.g. I want you to...). My language is directive and unambiguous. My directness shows I care for my team.	1--2--3--4--5	I use a more interpretive style for giving tasks to subordinates. I invite and request (e.g. Would you like to... It would be great if you could...). My language is preferably inclusive and suggestive. Inviting participation shows respect.
<b>INTELLECTUAL CONFRONTATION</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>RELATIONAL CONFRONTATION</b>
My disagreement with ideas is direct and factual, with or without emotion. The assumption being that only the idea is being attacked, not the relationship. We are just arguing, don't take it personally.	1--2--3--4--5	My disagreement is carefully balanced with avoiding offence, loss of face and the consequent disruption of harmony. Keeping a balance means being respectful of other people's ideas while being authentic about your own.
<b>TASK FOCUSED</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP FOCUSED</b>
My communication is towards completing a task. Colleagues don't need to become friends.	1--2--3--4--5	My communication is towards developing reciprocal relationships. Colleagues are like family.

Adapted from Geert Hofstede and Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations - Software of the Mind* (McGraw-Hill, 2005), p. 59, and from Craig Storti, *Figuring Foreigners Out* (Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999), pgs. 130-141.





### 3. Managing Face

#### Definition

Face refers to the set of claims people make about who they are and what they are able to do.

#### Explanation

The concept of “face” is a concern of all human beings, regardless of culture. The claims you make about yourself form the basis of your credibility – the trust and respect that others give you. However, how we build credibility and deal with face are not universal; rather, they are culturally defined realities. Therefore, in a multicultural workplace, everyone needs an intercultural understanding of face.

<p><b>1. Putting forward a face</b></p> <p>In every social situation, everyone “puts forward a face” – the sense of self that you consistently show other people through your words and behaviours.</p> <p>Your face is an essential social reality. Your face is what people come to expect will be consistent from you – the character and behaviours that build people’s confidence in you.</p>	<p><b>2. Accepting at face value</b></p> <p>We learn to “accept at face value” most of the claims other people make about themselves. Some claims are explicit: they are made verbally (e.g. “I am this type of person and I act this way”). Other claims are implicit: they are inferred through our behaviours (e.g. what we talk about, the values and attitudes we show, or the people we associate with). As long as each person accepts the faces that the other persons are putting forward, the social situation remains in harmony and work is productive.</p>	
	<p><b>3. Calling face into question</b></p> <p>When you “call someone’s face into question,” you are accusing the person of making false claims about his or her abilities or character. It could happen explicitly e.g. by telling the person that he is incompetent, or implicitly e.g. by being patronizing (talking down to someone, treating the person like a child).</p>	
<p><b>4. Losing face</b></p> <p>When you call a person’s face into question, that person risks “losing face.” Loss of face causes embarrassment. It undermines the person’s credibility – reputation, trust and respect.</p> <p>It threatens to “unmask” the person and take away his or her role in the group. Losing face threatens group harmony. It can affect everyone, not just one person.</p>		<p><b>5. Saving face</b></p> <p>Everyone, at some point, has been in a situation in which he had to “save face” – either your own or someone else’s. If you have ever told a “white lie” – to avoid hurting someone’s feelings or to avoid embarrassment – you have experienced trying to save face. It is a “face-saving strategy”.</p> <p>Skills like tact, diplomacy, sensitivity, and other forms of indirect communication are other kinds of face-saving strategies. Cultural backgrounds influence how people deal with the loss of face.</p>

## Cultural Views on Saving Face

Although face is a universal human concern, certain cultures attach much more significance to saving face. Northern European, American and other English-speaking cultures have less concern about face than Asian, African, Latino and Arab cultures, in which people are aware of face all of the time.

Think about these questions as you consider the following paraphrased comments about “face”:

1. The Chinese have a saying – *People can't live without face like trees can't live without bark*. What are the cultural sayings, proverbs or views on face in your culture?
2. In your multicultural workplace, have you noticed any differences in how people deal with saving or losing face? Think about behaviours such as how people deal with mistakes, disagree with supervisors or coworkers, confront others, or handle conflict.
3. What are the rules – written or unwritten – for maintaining harmony in your team or workplace?

**African** Understanding the African principle of maintaining harmony (face) at almost any cost in interpersonal relationships will serve the Westerner well ... Africans will resist opening up without first being personally close. If the relationship does become close, the communication style will then become more direct. (*Explore African Culture, Harmony Trumps Culture*).<sup>19</sup>

**Asian** In deciding upon their own behaviour, they attach great weight to the anticipated reactions of other people. They act in accordance with external expectations rather than internal wishes or personal integrity, so that they can protect face. To function as an integral part of the social network, they are inclined to behaviours such as conformity, non-offensive strategy, submission to social expectations and worry about external opinions in any attempt to achieve personal goals. (*Encountering the Chinese, p. 127*)

**Arab** Under all circumstances, a man must not allow his “face” to be “blackened”; he must always try to “whiten his face”, as well as the face of the group to which he belongs. No matter the cost, one must defend one’s public image. (*The Arab Mind, pg. 96*)

**Latino** For Latinos, direct communication is only preferred when it doesn’t threaten the harmony in relations. (*Latino Culture, pg. 51*)

**Indian** Most of what is done and not done in Indian society – especially what is said and not said – comes down to the need to save face; one’s own and more importantly, the face of others, in particular one’s seniors and elders. (*Speaking of India, pg. 23*)

**American** No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. (*Quote by Eleanor Roosevelt*)

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<sup>19</sup> Adapted from [www.exploreafricanculture.com/apps/blog/show/1426254-harmony-trumps-frankness](http://www.exploreafricanculture.com/apps/blog/show/1426254-harmony-trumps-frankness), accessed November 2014. The additional resources are listed in the resources section of this handbook.

## 4. Dealing with Mistakes in the CDSS

Everybody makes mistakes. They can vary in their causes and the degrees of significance. Mistakes can have far-reaching consequences or be unimportant. They can occur frequently, infrequently, or be repeated by the same person.

Making mistakes, documenting them, learning from them, and putting in measures to avoid them in the future is an integral part of working in the CDSS. Mistakes are unavoidable for everyone because of the person-centered nature of the job. This is both a fixed reality and a unique aspect of the sector's culture. Learning to find mistakes, admit them, point them out and prevent them is ongoing.



**Learning from mistakes is part of the culture.** For every CDSS employee, it is essential to let go of the norms from your first culture and deal with mistakes according to the sector's cultural norms. In the Canadian workplace, a mistake is usually seen as a valuable learning experience. Everyone makes mistakes, but smart people deal with them quickly and avoid making the same mistake again. Companies invest a lot of resources in hiring new employees, from advertising the position to training them for the job. You are too valuable as an employee to lose your job from a mistake, but you need to learn from your mistakes, avoid making them again, and bring them up to the right person as soon as possible.

### Three Habits to Remember for Dealing with Mistakes

#### 1) Always ask

Always ask when you don't know something. Ask for clarification whenever you don't understand. The only stupid question is the question you don't ask or the one you keep asking. So use a notebook to write down what you need to remember.

#### 2) Bring up Mistakes ASAP

If you make a serious mistake, tell your supervisor or team *as soon as possible*. Don't try to fix it, especially if it is beyond your control. Don't try to hide it either. Instead, bring it up with your team or supervisor. Mistakes can be changed into learning experiences if they are dealt with as soon as possible and not repeated.

#### 3) Learn from your Mistakes

Don't fight your mistakes. Admit them, move on, and avoid them the next time. Being able to admit errors and learn from them builds your credibility. But your credibility is lost when you keep making the same mistake or refuse to admit to a mistake. You don't "lose face" for making a mistake. You do "lose face" when you repeat the mistake, if you deny it, or blame someone else, or don't catch the mistake in time.





## The Common Canadian Approach to Pointing Out Mistakes

Canadians usually point out mistakes using some or all of the following steps:

1. Begin by giving your coworker the benefit of the doubt (i.e. something unexpected or outside their control may have contributed to the error, such as another person). In this way, you start with the right emotions, without accusation in your voice, expressions or body language.
2. Find what is correct first. Affirm what is correct before questioning the certainty of facts or asking about errors.
3. Be flexible. Allow for explanations, new facts or alternative approaches that you are unaware of.
4. Suggest, don't tell. Suggest specific changes or alternatives.
5. Use "softeners" (such as could, perhaps, or may). For example, "you may have made a mistake", "you might have perhaps..."
6. Remember the Canadian perspective – mistakes are opportunities to learn. It is human to err, as long as you avoid the mistake next time.
7. Set a reasonable deadline. Give a specific time frame to correct the error, but also give the person a reasonable amount of time to improve their performance.

It is not unusual for people from cultures with a more direct feedback style to clash with the softer Canadian style.


## The Direct, Indirect and Canadian Styles of Giving Feedback

In the example below, the three speakers need to point out a coworker's mistake in a set of statistics about aging populations in Canada.

**Task** – Read the three different responses. They are all saying the same thing, but with different communication styles.

Notice the Canadian tendency to affirm what is correct, to question, to suggest or imply, and to use “softeners”. Match the dialogue to its communication style. Write either A, B or C in the box.

<p>A “Your statistics on aging are wrong. You can correct them and give me the report tomorrow.”</p>	<p>B “Most of the statistics sound great. I am not sure about the numbers on demographic trends. Perhaps we should double-check those. There is time. We can wrap this report up by tomorrow.”</p>	<p>C “You can give me the report tomorrow instead, if you like. Our workforce is aging quite quickly. Did you notice how much the facts on demographics can vary?”</p>
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Communication Styles	Explanation
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Direct</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Descriptor</b> “Intellectual Confrontation.” Straightforward and fact-based. Pragmatic and rational.</li> <li>○ <b>Values</b> “Saving face” is not important. Don’t be offended; it is matter-of-fact, not personal. It doesn’t hurt to admit your errors, learn from them, and then avoid making them again.</li> <li>○ <b>Misperceptions</b> In most Canadian workplaces, most of the time, this style is ineffective if not first preceded with affirming what is correct. Otherwise, the communication can be seen as overly critical and negative.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Canadian</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Descriptor</b> “Relational Confrontation.” Starts by affirming what is correct. Then suggests specific changes or alternative approaches. Questions the certainty of facts, or implies there are mistakes. Allows for the unexpected or unknown.</li> <li>○ <b>Values</b> This approach is meant to keep a positive spirit to what could easily be an awkward discussion.</li> <li>○ <b>Misperceptions</b> To others, the speaker may seem overly nurturing. Others may feel that the speakers approach might leave too much ambiguity around the error. It might make the person think that everything is going well, instead of clearly understanding that a mistake was made, and exactly what the mistake was.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Indirect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Descriptor</b> “Unspoken Confrontation.” Rarely confronts, especially if the person is more senior. The mistake is not mentioned; rather, the mistake is raised by suggesting or implying. The speaker will use body language and other non-verbal communication to tell you about the mistake. Sometimes just silence or restrained comments will communicate error.</li> <li>○ <b>Values</b> The intention is to “save face”.</li> <li>○ <b>Misperceptions</b> Others may completely overlook what she is trying to imply. They may not be listening for indirect meaning.</li> </ul>

## 5. Case Study #6A

### Reza Reacts to Face

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Reza came to Canada with a finance background. In his previous work, he had supervised a team of accountants in a family-run business. Shortly after looking for work in Canada, he was hired by the finance department at a college. The job was an entry-level position but the director said there was opportunity for career growth if Reza was patient. A few weeks went by. During one lunch break, Reza shared with a coworker how proud his family and ethnic community were of him. To get a job working in an educational institute was a sign of great prestige since people in his community placed great value on education.



After six weeks – at the end of his probation period – Reza had his first performance review with his supervisor. The supervisor raised some serious concerns about the quality of Reza’s work. He also noted that Reza was taking too long to learn the new software, even though he had said he was familiar with it in the job interview. Reza was in disbelief and was deeply hurt by what he felt was harsh feedback. He felt his supervisor had no confidence in him. In fact, he lost his motivation and was unable to recover, and the quality of his work suffered more. His supervisor wondered whether Reza had actually ever worked in finance.

Reza lost his job at the college. Soon after that, he moved from that city to a different part of Canada. He, along with his family, was unable to recover from the loss of face he suffered in front of his ethnic community. Reza believed the only way to rebuild his credibility was to start again somewhere else.

#### **Essential Skill**

**Critical Thinking** Employees need to evaluate the relevance of cultural norms and expectations they bring from their first cultures in order to adapt to their workplace culture.

## 5. Case Study #6B

### Alexander's Communication and Attitude Change because of Intercultural Training

Alexander works at one of the most culturally diverse agencies in the city. Since Alexander was new to Canada, his team coordinator suggested he think about participating in an intercultural training course.

At first, he was surprised at being asked to participate. "What is wrong with me?" he thought. "Perhaps my supervisor doesn't like my culture." He didn't realize that intercultural training is useful for everyone in Canada, not just recent immigrants. But he joined the course. It ended up being more useful than he had imagined. Here are Alexander's thoughts after the intercultural training:



Since the course, I have gained so much more professionalism in the way I deal with my colleagues. The intercultural knowledge has helped me to understand the cultural differences in the world. I am so much more aware that Canada has a multicultural workplace. I do not judge my teammates like before, when I attributed some of their behaviours to discrimination. I have learned to suspend judgment on my coworkers, and respect my coworkers and their values. I treat each situation on a case-by-case basis. I have learned more about my own cultural background and now I want to educate others about my culture.

This learning boosted my confidence. I never used to look in the eyes of the person I was talking to. Now I am even comfortable looking my supervisor in the eye when she talks to me. My communication style has changed. I get to the point when answering questions now, instead of going round and round explaining myself. I am clear, concise and coherent. I use simple short and clear sentences. I listen well and if I do not understand, I ask for clarification. When I work with coworkers, clients and guardians, I am much more aware of their communication and how their cultures might influence their styles.

Recently, I attended our agency's Christmas party. Previously, I would have stayed home. As I said, this course has boosted my confidence. I took part in all the group activities, even though most of the games were new to me. I ended up in a group with supervisors, directors and coordinators. I felt free to ask them to teach me the rules. Some asked me questions about my country, which made me feel really happy.

To some people, my victory may seem small. But to me it is life changing. I not only know how to live more confidently in Canada, but I also know how to work well with everyone in our multicultural agency. Intercultural skills are important for everyone to have, native-born and new Canadians.

#### Essential Skills

**Oral Communication** Practitioners update their teams on information related to client behaviours. They must present the information in a way that can be easily and quickly comprehended by coworkers.

**Continuous Learning** Practitioners learn continuously to stay abreast of new community resources and support services for clients. They attend courses and workshops offered by the professional association and community organizations. They learn about subjects ranging from administering medication to cultural diversity.

## 6. Review Questions

### Reflection Questions Becoming Self-Aware of Cultural Approaches to Mistakes

Dealing with mistakes is a critical part of the workplace. As this module has shown, culture can have a significant impact on behaviours. Read through the chart below. Each dimension is made up of a pair of opposites on a one to five continuum.

- Do a self-assessment by answering the following question: What are your preferred ways of dealing with mistakes?  
Mark where you believe you lie on the continuum between one and five.

**Chart 10** Comparing Opposite Approaches to Mistakes

	Column A		Column B
1 <b>General</b> In my opinion...	Mistakes are part of life. If you focus too much on avoiding mistakes you will miss life's opportunities. Mistakes are opportunities to learn lessons.	1--2--3--4--5	Mistakes can always be prevented. You need to plan, prepare and be thorough. Mistakes are to be avoided at all costs, even if it means missing an opportunity.
2 <b>Serious Mistake</b> When I make a mistake with serious consequences...	I bring the mistake to the attention of my coworkers or supervisor as soon as possible.	1--2--3--4--5	I wait to see what will happen. I may try to hide the mistake. Maybe no one will notice. There is no point in bringing unnecessary attention to myself.
3 <b>Telling Supervisor</b> When my supervisor makes a mistake...	I am comfortable telling him or her.	1--2--3--4--5	I am not comfortable telling him or her.
4 <b>Hearing from Supervisor</b> When a supervisor tells me I have made a mistake, and I did...	I am comfortable admitting it. I will make the correction and avoid repeating it in the future.	1--2--3--4--5	I am not comfortable admitting it. I will try to avoid taking the blame. I may even deny the mistake to save face.
5 <b>Telling Subordinate</b> When a person I supervise or mentor makes a mistake...	I first ask myself if I have contributed to the mistake in any way. I am comfortable sharing responsibility if it means avoiding the mistake in the future.	1--2--3--4--5	I make sure the person knows he or she is responsible and that I will be watching the behaviour closely in the future.
6 <b>Hearing from Subordinate</b> When someone more junior than me, tells me I have made a mistake...	I am comfortable admitting my mistake if it is true. I think that people respect a leader who can freely admit he or she is not perfect.	1--2--3--4--5	I do not expect someone more junior to point out my mistakes. They could tell me indirectly, but not directly. It would be a direct challenge to my authority. I would lose face.
7 <b>With Others</b> When my team member or partner makes a mistake...	I am willing to take some ownership of the error and share the responsibility.	1--2--3--4--5	I expect the person to admit the mistake and take full responsibility for it.

2. Do a workplace assessment. What are the norms for dealing with mistakes in your workplace? Mark it on the continuum between one and five. Do the norms tend to be more to column A or B?
3. Do any of your coworkers (in your multicultural workplace) demonstrate norms that are different to the expected norms?

## Comprehension Questions

Answer the following multiple-choice questions.

1. Which of the following is true about the Canadian communication style in the workplace?
  - a) Direct
  - b) Circular
  - c) Emotionally attached
  - d) None of the above
  
2. Which of the following best describe the Canadian approach to dealing with mistakes?
  - a) Employees should be comfortable admitting an error, willing to make the correction and avoid repeating the error in the future.
  - b) Mistakes are part of life. Lessons to be learned.
  - c) If you make a critical mistake, wait to see what will happen. Hide the mistake. Maybe no one will notice.
  - d) Both A and B.

# The Six Best Practices of Multicultural Workplaces

## Appendix A

The following is a list of six habits that every employee should develop to work effectively in Canada's multicultural workplaces.

### **1. Be aware of diversity.**

Recognize that people from different cultural backgrounds bring cultural differences to the workplace. Don't minimize or ignore cultural differences. Be aware of them. Know that Canada's population will continue to depend on immigration in the coming years to maintain our economic and population growths.

### **2. Be quick to suspend judgment.**

When you experience conflict or offense in a cross-cultural scenario, take that mental step back and suspend judgment. Take emotion out of your reaction and respond with intercultural intelligence. Try to figure out if the issue is rooted in cultural differences.

### **3. Look below the waterline.**

Most cultural differences are rooted in the invisible dimension of cultural values – everything from cultural “Dos and Don'ts” to communication styles and work ethics. When conflict or offense happens, try to figure out the hidden motivations and values.

### **4. Use the two-way street approach.**

In the “two-way street” approach, immigrants adapt to the mainstream Canadian norms, while the Canadian workplace adapts to a more culturally diverse workforce. This approach requires calm and respectful open dialogue between people to resolve cultural differences and build on human similarities. No matter who changes, it is not a matter of replacing anyone's cultural norms but of expanding one's range of cultural skills. Moreover, in the CDSS, all behaviours, communication and attitudes should be focused on providing the best service to the clients.

### **5. Be open.**

When working in a context of diversity, it is inevitable that people will make mistakes. Therefore, a culturally diverse community must avoid taking offense and stay open to learning from mistakes. In fact, learning from mistakes is integral to the work in CDSS. Stay curious.

### **6. Learn.**

As one of the most culturally diverse sectors, it is in every CDSS employee's interests to continue to grow in their intercultural skills and understanding of difference. Beyond this handbook, take hold of the right opportunities to learn, both in the classroom setting and informally through conversations and curiosity.

# The Bennett Model

The Five Stages of Intercultural Development

## Appendix B

### Ethno-centric Phase

Stage 1. Denial

Stage 2. Defense

Stage 3. Minimization

### Ethno-relative Phase

Stage 4. Acceptance

Stage 5. Adaptation

### Outline

1. Who Created the Model?
2. What does the Bennett Model Explain?
3. How can I Use the Bennett Model?

### Overview

You will be introduced to the five stages of intercultural development, namely Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance and Adaptation. You can reflect on the stage you are at and how to adjust to working in a multicultural team.

### Application

1. Recognize your responses to cultural differences.
2. Follow the developmental tasks towards becoming more culturally competent.



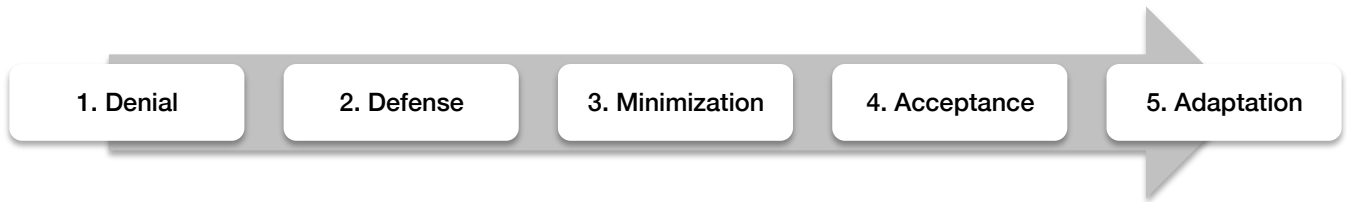
# 1. Who Created the Model?

Milton J. Bennett (PhD) pioneered the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS), also known as the Bennett Model. Dr. Bennett<sup>20</sup> served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Micronesia from 1968 to 1970, and returned to the US to complete his doctorate in intercultural communication and sociology at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. In 2006 he founded the *Intercultural Development Research Institute* (IDRI). The DMIS is used internationally to guide intercultural training design and to assess intercultural competence.

# 2. What does the Bennett Model Explain?

## The Five Stages of Intercultural Development

The Bennett Model, or DMIS, explains people’s reactions to human differences as five different stages of development from denial to adaptation.



The Bennett Model is one of the most useful frameworks to help people understand the journey towards becoming interculturally competent in a multicultural workplace. In a cross-cultural situation, if you are aware of why you are thinking, speaking, behaving or feeling a certain way, it is easier to react more effectively to people.

STAGE 1 Denial	STAGE 2 Defense	STAGE 3 Minimization	STAGE 4 Acceptance	STAGE 5 Adaptation
People are comfortable with the familiar. They show disinterest or avoidance of people from other cultures. They might live isolated lives or are unaware of other cultures.	People have a strong commitment to their own worldview. They have a distrust of other cultural behaviours or ideas. They may have had a negative cultural experience. They polarize “us” and “them”, or even see “them” as a threat.	People recognize but minimize differences. They overemphasize similarities, which then projects their culture onto other people’s experiences, often unknowingly forcing their culture onto others.	People recognize and respect alternative cultural behaviours. They are aware that their culture is only one way of seeing and being in the world. They have accepted that differences are real and significant.	People are able to take the perspective of another culture to understand or evaluate situations. They are able to adapt their behaviours accordingly without losing their own culture.

<sup>20</sup> See Dr. Bennett’s bio at [www.idrinstitute.org/page.asp?menu1=2&menu2=3](http://www.idrinstitute.org/page.asp?menu1=2&menu2=3)

### 3. How Can I Use the Bennett Model?

#### Move from Ethno-centric to Ethno-relative Views

The Bennett Model organizes the five stages into two worldviews: the ethno-centric and ethno-relative views. The goal of intercultural growth is to move into a more ethno-relative view of the world. The Model defines five orientations to cultural differences. They are listed below,<sup>21</sup> along with the strengths of each stage and the specific **developmental task** to move a person on to the next stage. According to the model, orientations four and five are better able to support the attitudes, skills and knowledge for intercultural competence.

**Chart 11** The Bennett Model

ETHNO-CENTRIC WORLDVIEW			ETHNO-RELATIVE WORLDVIEW	
In this view, the person is only focused on his or her own culture. The person is either unaware of significant differences or uncomfortable with them.			In this view, the person accepts there are important cultural differences. He or she is willing to adapt behaviour and communication.	
STAGE 1 Denial	STAGE 2 Defense	STAGE 3 Minimization	STAGE 4 Acceptance	STAGE 5 Adaptation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ People are comfortable with the familiar.</li> <li>➤ They show disinterest or avoidance of people from other cultures.</li> <li>➤ People who live isolated lives or are intentionally unaware of other cultures in the community can find themselves in this stage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ People have a strong commitment to their own worldview and a distrust of other cultural behaviours or ideas.</li> <li>➤ They may have had a negative cultural experience, become offended.</li> <li>➤ They polarize “us” and “them”, or even see “them” as a threat.</li> <li>➤ People in culture shock can find themselves in this stage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ People recognize but minimize cultural differences.</li> <li>➤ They overemphasize human and cultural similarities, which then projects their culture onto other people’s experiences, often unknowingly forcing their culture onto others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ People recognize and respect alternative cultural behaviours.</li> <li>➤ They are aware that their culture is only one way of seeing and being in the world.</li> <li>➤ They have accepted that differences are real and significant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ People are able to take the perspective of another culture to understand or evaluate situations.</li> <li>➤ They are able to adapt their behaviours accordingly without losing their own culture.</li> </ul>
Developmental Tasks to Move Forward →			How to Grow!	
People at S1 should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start noticing and thinking about cultural differences (e.g. engage people from the cultures within reach).</li> </ol>	People at S2 should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avoid stereotyping the “other”.</li> <li>2. Suspend judgment.</li> <li>3. Identify the commonalities between people, despite the differences (e.g. views, needs, goals).</li> </ol>	People at S3 should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grow in cultural self-awareness</li> <li>2. Develop deeper and more sophisticated cultural lenses (e.g. learn about culture-general concepts such as power distance).</li> </ol>	People at S4 should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Figure out how to value other cultural norms without giving up their own.</li> <li>2. Deepen understanding of specific cultures.</li> <li>3. Make fair ethical judgments by taking cultural differences into consideration.</li> </ol>	People at S5 should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhance their abilities to “shift” thinking and behaviours to be in harmony with the other culture.</li> <li>2. Build capacity to experience the world from two or more cultural perspectives.</li> </ol>

<sup>21</sup> For more information on the Bennett Model, do a web search for the following resource, written by Mitchell R. Hammer, *The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI): An Approach for Assessing and Building Intercultural Competence*, <https://idiinventory.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/IDI-Chp-161-9-16-20091.pdf>

The following resources can be used to expand your intercultural knowledge beyond this handbook. Each of the suggested resources has been selected for its readability and logical next step up from the level of this handbook.

### Books on the Building Blocks of Culture

The books listed below go into more depth about non-verbal communication, intercultural communication, and power distance. They also explore other building blocks, namely time orientations, individualism and collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, locus of control, tolerance for ambiguity, and thinking orientations.

TITLES	AUTHORS	PUBLISHERS
• <i>Cultures and Organizations</i>	Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede	McGraw-Hill Books, 2005
• <i>Figuring Foreigners Out</i>	Craig Storti	Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999
• <i>When Cultures Collide</i>	Richard D. Lewis	Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999
• <i>Coaching Across Cultures</i>	Phillipe Rosinski	Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2003
• <i>Cultural Intelligence</i>	Brooks Peterson	Intercultural Press - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2004
• <i>The Global Diversity Desk Reference</i>	Lee Gardenswartz, Anita Rowe	John Wiley & Sons, 2003

### Culture-Specific Books

The books listed below explore specific cultures in depth.

TITLES	AUTHORS	PUBLISHERS
• <i>Latino Culture</i>	Nilda Chong, Francia Baez	Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2005
• <i>Understanding Arabs</i>	Margaret K. Nydell	Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2006
• <i>Speaking of India</i>	Craig Storti	Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2007
• <i>Encountering the Chinese</i>	Hu Wenzhong, Cornelius Grove	Intercultural Publishing - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999
• <i>Into Africa</i>	Yale Richmond, Phyllis Gestrin	Intercultural Press - Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1998

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## Intercultural Resources for the Disability Sector

The books listed below are sector-specific resources with relevance to the disability sector. Each book has chapters that deal with specific cultural groups.

TITLES	AUTHORS	PUBLISHERS
• <i>Culture and Disability</i>	John H. Stone	Sage Publications, 2005
• <i>Counseling the Culturally Diverse</i>	Derald Wing Sue and David Sue	John Wiley & Sons, 2013
• <i>Cross-Cultural Caring</i>	Nancy Waxler-Morrison	UBC Press, 2005

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## Websites

The websites listed below are sector-specific resources with relevance to the disability sector.

Title	Content	Website Link
• <i>Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange (CIRRIE)</i>	CIRRIE makes a number of resources freely available to the disability community. CIRRIE has developed a thirteen-volume monograph series, The Rehabilitation Provider's Guide to Cultures of the Foreign Born. The monographs contain specific information about culture that rehabilitation service providers can use to more effectively meet the needs of foreign-born recipients of rehabilitation services.	<a href="http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/culture/monographs/">http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/culture/monographs/</a>
• <i>Centre for Intercultural Learning (CIL)</i>	CIL is run out of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. It contains culture-specific details from multiple countries.	<a href="http://www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/countryinsights-apercupays-eng.asp">http://www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/countryinsights-apercupays-eng.asp</a>
• <i>Global Edge</i>	Created by the International Business Center at Michigan State University. It contains culture-specific details from multiple countries.	<a href="http://globaledge.msu.edu">http://globaledge.msu.edu</a>

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## Resources For New Canadians (and those who have already lived here for a long time)

The following resources are freely available online for download. They are written specifically to support newcomers to Canada with integration.

Title	Content	Website Link
• <i>Workplace Integration Series</i>	A set of four resources – The Desk Reference & Workbook and the Handbook & Workbook. The set is freely available on the AWES website on the Tools and Publication page.	<a href="http://www.awes.ca/services/tools-and-publications/">http://www.awes.ca/services/tools-and-publications/</a>

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The answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review section of each module are as follows.

MODULE 1	1.	C
	2.	B

MODULE 2	1.	D
	2.	B

MODULE 3	1.	B
	2.	D

MODULE 4	1.	D
	2.	B

MODULE 5	1.	D
	2.	B

MODULE 6	1.	D
	2.	D

MODULE 7	1.	C
	2.	D

MODULE 8	1.	D
	2.	D

