Multiculturalism in Communities
A Guide to Developing and Sustaining Dialogue
DISCLAIMER:

This is a tool to stimulate communities to develop a dialogue on multiculturalism. The views expressed by those interviewed and profiled in this guide do not reflect the formal position of the Government of British Columbia or Simon Fraser University.
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The Government of British Columbia recognizes there are social, cultural and economic benefits associated with promoting multiculturalism and eliminating racism. The Multiculturalism Act of British Columbia, enacted in 1993, affirms this vision. The act recognizes and promotes multiculturalism as a reflection of racial and cultural diversity of British Columbians. It reaffirms that discrimination has no place in our society and, most importantly, promotes the cross-cultural understanding that leads to the development of safe and welcoming communities.

The Government of British Columbia plays a pivotal role in providing leadership in developing strategic responses to the challenges of managing, valuing and understanding cultural diversity. This commitment is met by the Multiculturalism and Inclusive Communities Office. The office fulfills its mandate regarding multiculturalism and countering racism and hate with initiatives focused on public education, partnership development, and response mechanisms. The commitment towards multiculturalism and anti-racism is also met through a minister-appointed Multicultural Advisory Council (the council).

Since 2005, the council, made up of diverse community representatives, has supported various approaches to engaging communities in multiculturalism, in which people from various sectors could come together in a shared partnership to explore the future of multiculturalism in British Columbia. On Feb. 14, 2005, a dialogue on multiculturalism became this forum and provided an opportunity for the council to launch the Strategic Framework for Action: A Strategy to Stimulate Joint Action on Multiculturalism and the Elimination of Racism in British Columbia. The framework provided a starting point for discussion regarding the importance and benefits of multiculturalism and the elimination of racism, and to articulate a cohesive and shared vision for British Columbians.

The experience of the February 2005 dialogue on multiculturalism encouraged participants to continue to explore the use of a community dialogue model to further develop and deepen our understanding of multiculturalism. The points raised at the dialogue has assisted the Government of British Columbia in implementing its strategy to engage regional voices in dialogues that explore themes related to multiculturalism, the elimination of racism and supporting welcoming and inclusive communities.

Since 2006, two pilot initiatives have been initiated with a key aspect of the strategy to sustain community level dialogues in smaller communities throughout British Columbia. Dialogues on multiculturalism were convened in Kamloops (2006) and Prince Rupert (2007). In Kamloops, the focus centred on building a welcoming community that would help to attract new skilled workers and residents to help the community to grow and prosper.
In Prince Rupert, a question was posed to participants on how to articulate what a truly culturally diverse community would look like and to consider this question as Prince Rupert residents.

During a second phase of the pilot, the Government of British Columbia continued its work to sustain community dialogues throughout British Columbia that supported cultural diversity and to strengthen welcoming communities. The dialogue on multiculturalism initiative is an emerging community education tool that will increase knowledge capacity on themes linked to multiculturalism, the elimination of racism and the support of welcoming and inclusive communities. A total of 12 communities convened dialogues on multiculturalism: Abbotsford, Burns Lake, Campbell River, Duncan, Fernie, Nanaimo, Powell River, Smithers, Terrace, Vanderhoof, Vernon and Williams Lake. The minister responsible for multiculturalism, Hon. Wally Oppal, extended greetings to participants in all 12 communities.

Dialogue communities connected various residents and sector representatives at the local and regional level to engage on civil society themes of how to create participation and engagement opportunities for newcomers and long-time Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents. Important to the dialogic model is the ability to involve under-represented community stakeholders in the conversation on multiculturalism; specifically, local business groups, social planning councils and community futures organizations and First Nations communities that have participated in the planning and convening of the Dialogues from a regional perspective. For example, in Smithers, the Office of the Wet’suwet’en and the hereditary chiefs and elders of the Moricetown Band were integral to the planning and proceedings of the day.

In Williams Lake, over 95 people engaged many sectors of the community and society, including a strong representation from local youth. Chief Willie Alphonse Jr. and Elder Willie Alphonse Sr. of the Williams Lake Band both spoke, along with representatives from the local business communities and the local Sikh community members. In Powell River, the dialogue on multiculturalism engaged many sector representatives, including a group from Canada World Youth, local representatives and homestay youths from around the world. Sliammon First Nation co-chair Marlane Christensen was joined by Sara Blum in the development of the program for the Powell River dialogue. Chief Walter Paul of the Sliammon Indian Band welcomed guests to the territory and region.

The dialogue conversations have interwoven inspiring and explorative stories and personal narratives. Many of the dialogues also engage artists to create artistic observations through real-time visual art pieces that contributed to the legacy tools of each dialogue.

To read more about the key learnings gained from phase II during 2007/08 of the dialogue initiative, see Appendix I.
Canada is seen worldwide as a leader in a unique experiment called multiculturalism. According to the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website:

“Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging… The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence.

Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes 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.”

To what degree do Canadian communities live up to this ideal of a truly inclusive society, free from racist attitudes and discrimination? Is there a gap between the promise and reality?

To what extent is multiculturalism a genuine part of everyday life rather than co-existence among groups who may not like or trust or even know one another?

How do we ensure that multiculturalism is more than feasts, festivals and parties?

What is the difference between multiculturalism as a government policy and multiculturalism as a lived experience at the individual, community and organizational level?
Addressing these questions begins with dialogue.

On Feb. 14, 2005, working with many co-sponsors, Simon Fraser University’s Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue convened the Dialogue on the Future of Multiculturalism in British Columbia. Over 155 participants from private, public and community sectors took this opportunity to challenge their assumptions about multiculturalism and to create opportunities for connection, understanding and commitment to action. One of the key discoveries in this dialogue was the realization that multiculturalism must be a value for all citizens, not only for the newly arrived or those with strong cultural ties. Multiculturalism must transcend the traditional paradigm, which often involves advocacy and support for self-interested groups, practices and belief systems into which people are segmented.

Without a shared sense of responsibility between government, public institutions, private organizations, communities and individuals, change will not occur. Adults in workplaces, communities and homes need to be responsible for behaviour and attitudes that exclude or disrespect others because of race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, disabilities and other forms of difference.

British Columbia is widely recognized as the most culturally diverse province in Canada—this is one of the province’s most essential qualities. However, the reality of multiculturalism as a living public policy is complex and not easily realized. The first step is a commitment towards multiculturalism as an everyday experience on the street, in our schools, at our places of work, in our homes and in our minds and hearts.

‘Culture’ cannot be understood as static, eternally given, essentialist. It is always evolving, dynamic and hybrid of necessity. All cultures, even allegedly conservative or traditional ones contain multiple differences within themselves that are continually being re-negotiated.

Reconsidering multiculturalism: towards an intercultural project
Leonie Sandercock, 2003
WHAT THIS GUIDE INCLUDES

Multiculturalism in Communities: A Guide to Developing and Sustaining Dialogue is for leaders and organizations throughout B.C. who wish to use dialogue to examine and strengthen the multicultural framework of their community. It offers some tools and guidelines for convening communities of diverse interests—business, not-for-profit and civic sectors—in a frank exchange of ideas and experiences. Along with guidelines for establishing a broad-based dialogue (Part one: Planning and Convening Dialogues on Multiculturalism), this guide sketches some of the history of multiculturalism in Canada and British Columbia, and highlights a few of the key issues concerning multiculturalism in the 21st century (Part Two: Background on Multiculturalism).

Part Three: Multiculturalism and our Community offers a sequence of exploratory questions to spark discussion and reflection. These consist of a series of preliminary and follow-up questions to enable community members to discover the unique culturally diverse signature of their city, town, or neighbourhood. This section also offers dialogue questions and background material to support the four interviews on the accompanying DVD. Each of these interviews focuses on an important question regarding multiculturalism, such as:

1. Why do we need a multiculturalism policy?
2. How can we enhance multiculturalism in our schools?
3. How can we enhance multiculturalism in our places of work?
4. In what way might dialogue advance the cause of multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism is an ever-evolving quality and an ongoing dialogue. The concluding section of this guide, Part Four: Multiculturalism: A Call to Action, suggests formal and informal ways to continue and extend this dialogue in the community. It also identifies options for taking positive action to make multiculturalism an innate part of the fabric of your community.
Dialogue refers to a quality of talking together that allows a number of voices, ideas, perceptions and understandings to be heard. Dialogue is different from much of the talk in our culture, which takes the form of debate and discussion, polarized arguments or polite conversations in which no person is comfortable in either speaking the truth or listening to views different from their own. In such encounters, the tendency is to hold tightly to deeply held beliefs and certainties. We are often more interested in advocating for our views than in listening to others. As a result, little changes.

Dialogue, on the other hand, requires moving beyond what we think we already know, to learn from each other and to endeavour to understand a diversity of experiences and viewpoints. Because of its potential to create community through purposeful talk among equals, dialogue is the perfect metaphor for multiculturalism. In a recent interview with Dr. Joanna Ashworth of Simon Fraser University’s (SFU) Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, Dr. Mark Wexler, professor of human resource management at SFU Business, said:

Conversation is the working metaphor in multiculturalism, a conversation that involves a give and take rather than a contract. Give and take means groups have to be open to revision, improvisation, and have a willingness to work with others in making a language that is held in common. However, each group within multiculturalism maintains its own ethnic and cultural language.

“It is easy to have multiculturalism when you have a dominant group and a bunch of smaller groups that the dominant group acts tolerant toward. It is much more critical with no dominant group and a bunch of competing voices that in some sense raise the stakes in doing good governance.”

Mark Wexler
Dialogue on the Future of Multiculturalism in British Columbia
Feb. 14, 2005
DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

Dialogue is guided by a spirit of discovery and openness. Here are some of its features:

- It involves two or more people.
- It is marked by a climate of open participation by all of its participants.
- It involves commitment to the process of “seeing things through” to some meaningful understandings or agreements.
- It manifests an attitude of reciprocity among the participants — an interest, respect and concern that they share for one another, even when in disagreement.
- It tends toward a non-authoritarian view of learning, which involves incorporating new information into an existing framework, thereby expanding one’s understanding.

What Dialogue is Not

Dialogue is not debate, argument, negotiation, decision-making, deliberation, mediation or bargaining. Dialogue can create greater understanding of a particular issue, which may lead to a climate that is conducive to decision-making — however, decision-making is a separate process. In addition, dialogue is not a substitute for other forms of engagement, such as mediation or litigation.

Dialogue is not discussion, which leans toward persuading, gaining agreement on one meaning, and defending assumptions. On the other hand, dialogue is concerned with inquiring, unfolding shared meaning, integrating multiple perspectives and uncovering assumptions. For dialogue to be distinct from discussion, these must be present: equality, empathy and examining assumptions (Yankelovich, 1999).

It is also important to note that dialogue is not an abstract process that leaves feelings and values out of the conversation. Effective dialogue involves becoming aware of our own feelings and values, as well as those of other participants, so we may arrive at a fuller and more honest understanding.

“Multiculturalism is about sometimes friendly and sometimes tense critical engagements between cultures. It is not about shutting oneself up in a communal or cultural ghetto and leading a segregated and self-contained life. Rather it is about opening up oneself to others, learning from their insights and criticisms, and growing as a result into a richer and more tolerant culture.”

Bhikhu Parekh, professor of political philosophy, University of Westminster
Guardian Unlimited
Jan. 21, 2005
Guidelines for Convening Community Dialogue

Convening a dialogue is not a simple matter of gathering a group of people in a room and getting them to talk. The following guidelines will serve to ensure that such talk is collaborative, engaging and expansive.

Determine whether this issue is best served by a brief dialogue or an extended dialogue. A brief dialogue usually needs one to three sessions in which participants who already trust one another examine issues from a variety of viewpoints, usually in informal settings. An extended dialogue is needed for emotion-driven issues among people who mistrust each other. Such dialogue requires formal planning and may unfold over a number of weeks, months, even years.

Determine the reason for the dialogue. A lot of misunderstanding can be avoided if everyone understands and is in agreement with the purpose for a particular dialogue.

Here are some reasons that organizations, communities and government may engage in dialogue:

• To bring clarity to situations in which parties hold different frameworks and problem-definitions.
• To expand perspectives that are narrow or isolated.
• To help groups or organizations move through a transition.
• To address a lack of trust.
• To rebuild credibility.
• To establish a shared ownership of vision.
• To identify common ground among parties with diverse beliefs, backgrounds, professions, interests or traditions.
• To strengthen democracy (through policy dialogues).
• To foster collaboration (through increased understanding of the interests and values of partners).
• To improve understanding of the issues at hand (exploring hidden assumptions and judgments).
• To transform conflicts (unlike debate, dialogue does not seek to win an argument but to understand various perspectives more fully).
• To build community and promote active citizenship (through searching for common responses to public problems).
• To influence decision-makers.

Clarity concerning the anticipated outcomes is essential at the onset. These outcomes may need to be revisited over the course of a dialogue.
Engage a Facilitator

In the early stages of a dialogue, a skilled, objective facilitator will be helpful to “hold the context,” to ensure that everyone honours the established purpose of the dialogue.

Define the core questions to be explored in the dialogue. Your dialogue may explore a single question or several questions you may develop to support a progression of discoveries throughout several rounds of dialogue. Such questions need to be open-ended, energizing and focused on what really matters.

By way of example, here are some of the questions that were explored at the Dialogue on the Future of Multiculturalism in British Columbia, on Feb. 14, 2005:

- What is multiculturalism in Canada (and B.C.) really about?
- What is its vision and what are the barriers?
- What makes multiculturalism in BC unique, and what part does policy play in how multiculturalism is lived every day?
Establish Some Guidelines

It is important to take the time at the onset of a dialogue to clarify the “rules of engagement.” In other words, there needs to be agreement as to how participants will talk together and how they will handle disagreement or differences.

A dialogue is most successful if participants view each other as colleagues or peers and let go of job titles and organizational hierarchies. Suspending our own assumptions (including our deepest rooted assumptions about who we are and what we consider important) and bringing them into the open strongly supports an open inquiry, as does listening with empathy even when we don’t agree with or understand the speaker. The presence of listening in democratic communicative interactions is as important as speaking. Indeed, without listening there is no dialogue.

Here are some suggested guidelines. These need to be explored with the participants to ensure everyone understands them and is in agreement. It would be wise to select a small number of ground rules (six or less) that everyone can remember!

- Clarify what the group wants to accomplish.
- Suspend certainties.
- Suspend assumptions.
- Suspend roles and status.
- Slow down responses.
- Speak personally.
- Listen without interruption or judgment.
- Speak without judgment.
- Avoid cross-talk.
- Maintain a spirit of inquiry.
- Let go of the need for specific outcomes.

Ask Good Questions

As a dialogue progresses, it can be kept flowing by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions. Use questions that encourage conversation, such as: I wonder..., what if... and what does this mean to you? Keeping a dialogue flowing helps to clarify problems and challenges, and creates understanding of our own and others’ thinking processes.
In dialogue, we penetrate behind the polite superficialities and defenses in which we habitually armor ourselves.

Daniel Yankelovich
The Magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict into Cooperation
New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999
MULTICULTURALISM IN CANADA: A TRADITION

Diversity has characterized this country since its inception as a convergence of Aboriginal, Francophone and Anglophone peoples. Canada’s diversity involves not only honouring the ways in which peoples of varying backgrounds have been embraced, but also recognizing the ways in which the human rights of Aboriginal and some immigrant populations have been disregarded. Publicly taking responsibility for the errors of the past has been an important part of our evolution as a culturally diverse nation.

At the time of European settlement, there were more than 56 Aboriginal nations speaking more than 30 languages. French, and then English, colonial leaders signed treaties acknowledging Aboriginal nationhood. However, our country has since recognized how historic attitudes of racial and cultural superiority weakened the identity of Aboriginal peoples; suppressed their language, culture and spiritual practices; and eroded their political, economic and social systems. Today, steps continue to be taken to redress this painful legacy.

In addition, English-French bilingualism is at the core of Canada’s approach to diversity. As a defining characteristic of Canadian society, it has also been a source of tension that has at times threatened national unity.
During the latter half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, Canada pursued an immigration policy whose primary objective was to provide a labour pool for settlement and agriculture, and later to support industrialization. This period marked a gradual acceptance of minorities to maintain their culture and traditions. However, there were also regressive laws that stripped some Canadians of their citizenship rights, such as Canadians of Japanese descent during World War II. There were also practices that discriminated against minority groups, such as Ukrainian immigrants who were forced to work on the construction of Canada's roads, railways and national parks during World War I.

After World War II, Canadians began to recognize that continued discrimination within our borders devalued the sacrifices made in defeating a racist regime overseas. In 1950, the landmark Massey-Lévesque Commission linked cultural diversity and Canadian identity. At that time, 92 per cent of Canada's population growth was a consequence of the birth rate. Now, immigration has outpaced the natural birth rate and accounts for 53 per cent of our overall population growth. In 2006, it was estimated that close to one in five Canadians were a part of a visible minority. Our challenge now is to keep pace with an exponential growth in the diversity of our population in a smaller and more interdependent world.

Canada’s record for recognizing the rights and contributions of all of our peoples is far from perfect, but on the global stage we model the possibility of a culture in which different people can work together productively, in mutual acceptance and respect.

“I hold the presumption that divided societies are intrinsically unstable and weaker than ones in which people mix with others not like themselves, share experiences and ambitions.”

Trevor Phillips
Dialogue on the Future of Multiculturalism in British Columbia
Feb. 14, 2005
Multiculturalism is increasingly becoming one of British Columbia’s most valuable assets. For example, our record as a culturally diverse society was one of the key reasons B.C. was chosen to host the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

British Columbia is at important crossroads in its evolution as a culturally diverse society. Based on the 2006 census, B.C. is the province with the greatest proportion of visible minorities — nearly one in four people self-identified as a visible minority (25 per cent). In Vancouver, there is an even greater concentration with four in 10 people identifying as a visible minority (41.7 per cent). This was second only to Toronto where a slightly greater proportion is a visible minority (42.9 per cent). Population growth among Canada’s visible minorities was five times the rate of growth of the total population between 2001 and 2006. Specifically, about 16 per cent or 177,800 of the more than one million new immigrants who came to Canada during the past five years became British Columbians. They accounted for almost 27 per cent of the province’s population, up from 26 per cent in 2001. These changing demographics present both opportunities and challenges for multiculturalism and inclusive communities. With a number of voices and no single dominant group, it is even more critical that multiculturalism succeed as a way of forestalling racism, violence and other problems that can arise in the most diverse society in Canada.

B.C.’s economy and society are in a dynamic phase of rapid change and new immigration is essential to support that change. It is also a time in which British Columbia’s Aboriginal population has grown to a total of 170,025 (5 per cent), with the highest proportion (3.1 per cent) self-reporting under the North American Indian single response category. Of the total, 44,270 reported Métis as a single response category, with 805 reporting under the Inuit single response category.

Multiculturalism: recognizing, valuing, and promoting the contributions of citizens of diverse cultural origins while being part of a larger society, which is built on the values of democracy, equality, and integrity of each person.

The Future of Multiculturalism in British Columbia

**Strategic Framework for Action: A Strategy to Stimulate Joint Action on Multiculturalism and the Elimination of Racism in British Columbia Multicultural Advisory Council, 2005**
TAKING STOCK: WHAT DOES MULTICULTURALISM MEAN IN OUR COMMUNITY?

An effective dialogue requires accurate information as to the groups comprising B.C.’s population, as well as honest reflection as to how successful we have been in creating a community that is truly culturally diverse. Here are some questions that can help create a unique culturally diverse profile. Such a profile makes it possible to begin the dialogue from an informed place.

• What are the main groups (cultural, ethnic, language, religious, lifestyle) that comprise our community? In what proportion are these groups represented (approximately)?

• To what extent does our community offer all members equal access to occupations, positions of power and leadership, and facilities, such as restaurants, clubs and hotels?

• What are the major fault lines or areas of difference in our community?

• Has our community experienced any incidences of racism? How have these been dealt with? Could they have been dealt with more effectively? What proactive measures have we taken to prevent racism and create a positive environment in our community?

• How do the different groups in our community view multiculturalism?

• What are the biggest barriers to realizing the promise of multiculturalism in our community?

• What are our biggest strengths in advancing the cause of multiculturalism in our community?

• What questions do we still need to ask about multiculturalism and our community?
Summary of Mark Wexler Talk

Canada is seen as essentially a tolerant nation towards newcomers. Most of the world sees us as an experiment in diverse but harmonious living. Policies and attitudes toward immigration, ethnic mixing and diverse populations largely attempt to permit individuals, when they enter into the country, to keep their ethnic, religious and cultural lifestyles and identities for as long as they wish while they develop a Canadian identity. Canada has developed a strong ability to tolerate ambiguity in its growth and development and this has allowed a tolerance for regional differences, which translate easily into ethnic and cultural differences.

The reason that multiculturalism is so important in British Columbia now is that we are at a critical crossroads with its population base. We are moving from having the majority of white Caucasian heritage, with which BC stocked its land, towards this being a minority group that is no longer a demographically dominant group in numbers. It is always easier to have multiculturalism when you have a dominant group and a series of minority groups towards which the dominant group acts tolerant towards. It is much more critical when you have no dominant group but a whole lot of competing voices—this raises the stakes for doing good governance.

We are the most culturally diverse province in Canada. We are the present source of much of the discourse on multiculturalism, especially when we talk about our Gateway to the Pacific and, also, our abilities to work with native British Columbians and have treaties with First Nations. What it means to be a visible minority in British Columbia is changing and what it means to speak the dominant language is changing. When it comes to multiculturalism, we are entering a very exciting period.
Questions to Stimulate Dialogue

• How do attitudes on the ground in our community differ from those espoused in official policy on multiculturalism? What do such attitudes tell us about our community?

• What kind of multicultural policy, if any, would make sense for our community? What are the key principles behind such a policy? What organizations and individuals might we want to convene in order to enact such a policy? How might such a policy differ from current official policy?

• What are the difficulties in developing and/or enforcing a multicultural policy in our community?

• What structures or processes may we need to nurture or develop in order to support our community’s unique multicultural policy?

• What is your own lived experience of multiculturalism? Share a story about what multiculturalism means to you.

• What questions do we still need to ask about multicultural policy and our community?

“Ethnicity: a social and political construct used by individuals and communities to define themselves and others. Ethnicity refers to a person's cultural background, including his or her language, origin, faith and heritage. Ethnicity also comprises the ideas, beliefs, values, cultural identity and behaviour that are transmitted from one generation to the next.”

INTERVIEW 2: HOW CAN WE ENHANCE MULTICULTURALISM IN OUR SCHOOLS?

Summary of Paul Pahal Talk

Multiculturalism is fluid, ever-changing and ever-evolving. We need to challenge our perceived notions and stereotypes. Multiculturalism is not just about food, festivals and parties. It’s about learning more about the person who represents that culture.

Racism is less an issue about visible minorities and more about respecting each other and understanding each other’s culture. We are not taught each other’s culture at the school level and, as a consequence, schools tend to consist of groups of individuals hanging out together but not intermingling.

We need to include everyone in the dialogue, not just the ethnic groups, but everyone. Mainstream society has no idea what goes on in the culturally diverse world. We have to break down our preconceived ideas and, in so doing, understand that culture and what they can bring to the table.

Paul Pahal is an artist whose work has been exhibited and archived in collections in Canada, the US and Europe. He is also a music programmer, video producer, teacher and anti-racist activist. In his recent move into the field of education, Paul Pahal’s goals are to make connections with youth who feel disenfranchised and disconnected in part because of identity issues. He also intends to take culturally diverse and anti-racist education beyond studying different cultures in the classroom into a broader, more fluid understanding of culture.
Questions to Stimulate Dialogue

Review some of the taking stock questions (on page 18) to see if some could apply to an inquiry about multiculturalism and your school(s).

- Does our school district have a policy concerning race relations and/or multiculturalism? If so, who was involved in developing it? What are the basic principles contained within this policy? What actions are embedded in this policy?
- To what extent do school policies and teaching practices acknowledge the behavioural patterns and learning styles of the diverse ethnic groups in our school(s)?
- To what extent do the curricula at our school(s) present ethnic cultures in a realistic and historically accurate way?
- To what extent do students and staff of different ethnic and cultural groups interact harmoniously — in the hallways, in the classrooms, at extracurricular events and other similar situations? How can such harmonic interactions become more a part of our school culture?
- To what extent do students and staff of different ethnic backgrounds given opportunities to share their customs, beliefs, accomplishments and experiences in our school(s)? How may these opportunities be increased?
- How do our schools deal with conflicts that may arise among the different subgroups and how can we deal with such conflicts more effectively?
- How do our schools support the integration of new immigrants and their families and how can such support be improved?
- To what extent are students of diverse backgrounds given opportunities to play leadership roles in our school(s)? How can these opportunities be extended?
- What kind of a role do our students play in developing and improving upon our school’s culturally diverse community? How can their contribution be increased?
- What individuals and resources may we draw on to improve our school’s culturally diverse climate?
- What questions do we still need to ask about multiculturalism and our schools?

Diversity: the variety of characteristics that all persons possess, that distinguish them as individuals and that identify them as belonging to a group or groups. Diversity is a concept that includes notions of age, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family, sex, language, place of origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other characteristics that vary among people and groups within society.

INTERVIEW 3: HOW CAN WE ENHANCE MULTICULTURALISM IN OUR PLACES OF WORK?

Summary of Rhonda Margolis Talk

A diverse and inclusive workplace begins with a respect and an appreciation for individual differences and is sustained through leadership at all levels of the organization.

Multiculturalism in the workplace is about more than immigration and settlement issues. It is about diversity of a whole range of attributes and aspects of our identity—sexual orientation, age, culture, ethnicity, educational experience. All of those factors identify who we are and the groups that we belong to.

Employers must comply with human rights and employment equity laws to ensure equal access to opportunities and freedom from harassment and discrimination. But what is at the heart of making workplaces inclusive and respectful places that afford a sense of belonging is to have our policy as an underpinning to what we’re doing and to focus our work more on what’s in people’s hearts. This means creating the kind of workplace that we want to participate in, one which fosters individual dignity and builds a sense of community where everyone feels valued.

Dr. Rhonda Margolis is the principal of RLM Learning Innovations Inc., a leader in the design and facilitation of corporate education programs for public and private sector clients across Canada. RLM focuses on creating respectful, welcoming and vibrant workplaces through the facilitation of programs in building teams, valuing diversity, intercultural relations, and leadership development. Rhonda Margolis has a masters degree in counselling psychology and a doctorate in educational leadership.
Questions to Stimulate Dialogue

Review some of the taking stock questions (on page 18) to see if some apply to an inquiry about multiculturalism and your workplace(s).

- Does our workplace have a policy concerning race relations and/or multiculturalism? If so, who was involved in developing it? What are the basic principles contained within this policy? What actions are embedded in this policy?

- To what degree does our workplace create a sense of belonging among all of its employees and how can this feeling of belonging be enhanced?

- To what degree are employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds given opportunities to share their customs, beliefs, accomplishments and experiences in our workplace? How can these opportunities be increased?

- At our workplace, to what extent do employees of different ethnic and cultural groups interact harmoniously in hallways, offices, social events and meetings? How may such harmonic interactions become more a part of our workplace?

- How does our workplace deal with conflicts that may arise among the different subgroups and how can we deal with such conflicts more effectively?

- To what extent are employees of diverse backgrounds given opportunities to assume leadership roles in our workplace and what is the nature of these roles? How can these opportunities be extended?

- What kind of a role do our employees play in developing and improving upon our workplace's culturally diverse community? How may their contribution be increased?

- What questions do we still need to ask about multiculturalism and our workplace(s)?
INTERVIEW 4: HOW CAN DIALOGUE ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF MULTICULTURALISM?

Summary of Trevor Phillips Talk

The fundamental issue at the heart of multiculturalism could be distilled to the question asked by Rodney King during the 1992 Los Angeles race riots, “Why can’t people just get along?”

In the past 20 to 25 years, we have tried a policy of passive coexistence. This means that we recognize diversity. We may even sometimes celebrate people’s unique nationalities but what we haven’t done is engage those groups of people in a serious way. We haven’t given them key decision-making power in business, politics or public service and more than that, we haven’t created a climate in which diverse groups of people can live together, interact and so on.

More seriously, what we have developed is a kind of corporate multiculturalism, which means that we have come to privilege difference over equality and integration. A dangerous consequence of this form of multiculturalism is that someone with a cultural practice from their country of origin has the right to exercise it, regardless of what it is. I don’t believe, for example, that certain attitudes toward women that might be valid in rural Pakistan are transferable to urban London. We have to look at something different.

The challenge is to create a version of integration that allows people to retain an authentic core to their identity, but also to work within a common core of values shared by all British (or Canadian) people. What I am proposing could be called “progressive integration,” which I think is the only way to create a truly integrated society. The essence of an integrated society is that people have an equal chance to be doctors or dustmen, whatever it may be, and no one has less chance of becoming the CEO of a company because of race, ethnicity, cultural background or religion. Also, people are not excluded from restaurants, hotels, clubs, etc., because of their race or ethnicity.

In achieving this, it is essential to have a public conversation to which everyone is able to contribute. The aim at the end of the road is that all Canadians feel comfortable with diversity, where people can be different in a way that is authentically Canadian. People have to be able to talk about what being Canadian means, and what elements of black-ness or muslim-ness are consonant with that idea of Canadian-ness and which are not. So you need to have a public conversation to define what are the boundaries and what are the commonalities. In the end, someone like me ought to be able to say “I am black and British,” and feel that both terms of that expression are completely authentic and completely me.

Trevor Phillips is the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality in the United Kingdom. Born in London, he attended the Queen’s College Boys School in Guyana and then attended London’s Imperial College, where he became the first black president of the National Union of Students. After graduation, he went on to present and produce the London Programme at London Weekend Television, where he later became head of Current Affairs. Trevor Phillips was awarded an Order of the British Empire in 1999 and was elected a member of the Greater London Assembly in 2000.
Questions to Stimulate Dialogue

- What does it mean to be Canadian?
- What qualities and characteristics of (name of subgroup) would be considered fundamental to that group?
- What elements of (name of subgroup) coincide with our shared notion of what it means to be Canadian and what elements do not?
- How can we ensure that every group in our community is involved in the dialogue about multiculturalism?
- If our community were a truly integrated society, what would it be like?
- What are the small steps we can take to create a truly integrated community?

“It is important that institutions and communities foster a vision to create an inclusive society that accepts and understands its cultural diversity and effectively responds to all forms of racism.”

Strategic Framework for Action: A Strategy to Stimulate Joint Action on Multiculturalism and the Elimination of Racism in British Columbia
Multicultural Advisory Council, 2005
MULTICULTURALISM: A LIVING PRACTICE

Having engaged in a wide-ranging dialogue on a number of issues, it is now time to reflect on the implications of what has been explored and to commit to continuing the dialogue, both formally and informally. How may we apply what we have learned to make multiculturalism a living practice in our community?

Here are some questions to guide this inquiry:

• What have we learned about multiculturalism that was new or surprising?
• How may we apply what we have learned to enhance multiculturalism in our community?
• What new questions have arisen as a result of this dialogue/series of dialogues?
• How can we improve the dialogue within our community? What may we do better next time?
• What questions have we been unwilling to ask ourselves about multiculturalism in our community?

“...It is widely understood that culturally diverse communities have the potential to economically outperform communities lacking diversity.”

As vitally important as dialogue is in enhancing multiculturalism in our communities, practical action is essential to ensure that our goals become reality. The following section offers some practical suggestions for enhancing the culturally diverse environment in education, business and government sectors.

**TAKING ACTION IN OUR SCHOOLS**

- Connect with non-school organizations representing different cultures, ethnic groups, languages, religions and lifestyles.
- Using youth-based activities and interests, develop programs aimed at youth understanding of multiculturalism, such as Rock Against Racism and Internet discussion groups.
- Encourage diversity awareness training for children, youth and educators in public and private institutions.
- Develop a program to support the role of parents in teaching children at home about Canada’s culturally diverse society and the dangers of prejudice.
- Develop scholarships or awards for those students who advance or promote multiculturalism in their schools.
- Provide support to ensure the successful transition of Aboriginal students to public and post-secondary schools and training institutes.

Additional initiatives emerging from dialogue about multiculturalism in our schools include:
TAKING ACTION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

- Increase the participation of business owners from diverse backgrounds in chambers of commerce and boards of trade.

- Sponsor a campaign that promotes the skills and assets that Aboriginal people, new immigrants and individuals from diverse backgrounds bring to the business community.

- Create a cross-professional committee intended to establish fairer and less discriminatory criteria for the admittance of foreign-trained professionals in each of the licensed-based professions.

- Sponsor culturally diverse events in a variety of private and public spaces.

Additional initiatives emerging from dialogue about multiculturalism in our workplace(s) include:

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-
TAKING ACTION AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

- Create community leadership forums to promote culturally diverse activities that advance and celebrate cultural diversity.

- Create opportunities for religious leaders and congregations to come together to participate in shared activities and worship.

- Sponsor a “Vocational Excellence” program that awards local businesses and organizations recognizing and utilizing the extensive skills of members of ethno-cultural communities.

- Build systems to ensure victims of racism and hate behaviour are supported.

- Increase sponsorship of culturally diverse events in a variety of private and public spaces.

- Increase the representation and promotion of cultural diversity in neighbourhood celebrations.

Additional initiatives emerging from Do We Need a Multicultural Policy? and other dialogue sessions reflecting the bigger picture of our community include:

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
There is a common misconception that multiculturalism is concerned with immigrants and visible minorities — but, in truth, it is about all British Columbians. At the heart of multiculturalism is the idea that each individual and each group has worth and dignity.

The goal of multiculturalism is to help individuals function easily and effectively with members of their own and other racial, ethnic and cultural groups. Beyond that, the intention is to create a society in which each contributing group retains its core identity, while participating in a co-created overarching culture that embodies shared principles and values.

To be more than an idealized notion, multiculturalism must root itself at the community level. Each community has unique qualities and no two communities will address the issue in the same way. Multiculturalism is a dynamic concept that shapeshifts to reflect each community’s particular history, population, economy and customs. In addition, achieving a truly integrated society in which all members, regardless of origin and identity, are free to participate to the fullest extent that they are able and feel welcomed, is not a one-off, linear event. It is an exciting, ever-evolving journey that has no end — a reflection of a vigorous, ongoing process of discovery, which is unfailingly complex, often difficult, and always rewarding.

“Through a shared commitment to multiculturalism and the elimination of racism, all British Columbians will benefit from a society more open to critical thinking, more flexible in problem-solving, and more socially engaged—a dynamic environment for creating economic innovation and social respect.”

Strategic Framework for Action: A Strategy to Stimulate Joint Action on Multiculturalism and the Elimination of Racism in British Columbia
Multicultural Advisory Council, 2005
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

PHASE II KEY LEARNINGS

1. **Overview of the Project**

Dialogue programs at Simon Fraser University is committed to cultivating a culture of dialogue in public discourse through its training and consulting work. Dialogue, and its capacity for working creatively and productively to draw upon and build from diverse perspectives, offers an approach to community-building consonant with the aims of multiculturalism — that of valuing the diversity of all members of a community regardless of cultural, religious or gender differences. The Multiculturalism and Inclusive Communities Office, through this dialogue-based initiative, aims to provide capacity-building resources to communities through the support of SFU’s dialogue planning services for local community hosts.

These community-based dialogues encourage the strengthening of social capital — trust, empathy, understanding and collaboration — among diverse members of the community’s institutional, not for profit and private sector leaders and their publics.

SFU’s dialogue programs has worked collaboratively with the Multiculturalism and Inclusive Communities Office and 12 communities around B.C. to support the planning and implementation of innovative and interactive dialogue sessions. Planning these events involved meeting with community advisory groups on at least one occasion, several telephone meetings with the committees, as well as with the chairs of the committees, and email communication to ensure all aspects of the dialogue event are anticipated and coordinated.

The key tasks supported by SFU’s work include:

- A scan of the local situation and context, such as the multicultural landscape and local issues, concerns and opportunities for collaboration.
- Coordination and planning, such as with core questions and clarification of purpose, special guests, art-based tools and processes.
- Graphic design, developing invitee lists and media advisories.
- On-site program preparation.
- Facilitation at the event (as needed).
- Reporting and evaluation.

The sessions were held on weekends and mid-week, generally beginning in the morning and spanning the lunch hour and, in Abbotsford, in the evening. The decision about timing largely depended on the degree to which the public or broader community were invited. In each of the five communities where dialogues were convened, SFU’s role was to work closely with the host community’s advisory committee, which was often managed by a local project coordinator.
The community group typically met on five to six occasions to explore a number of important questions. They considered the theme and focus of the dialogue and their relevancy to the community’s context and priorities, to help determine the audience, format of the program and invited panellists or other experts. They also identified potential artists or creative people who were willing to assist in setting a convivial tone and identify success indicators for the event. On most of these occasions, SFU dialogue programs were present in person or by conference call.

The role of the Multiculturalism and Inclusive Communities Office was to review the defined purpose of the event and the proposed dialogue questions, to talk through ideas for the session format and timing, and to continuously raise questions about the purpose and audience.

2. Working with Local Organizing Committees

There is a delicate balancing act required by SFU’s role of respecting the unique conditions of the community, the composition of the local advisory committees and the experience of the project leaders to convene dialogue while offering ideas, suggestions and direction in dialogue planning and design. Many of the communities have embraced the format for dialogue, including co-facilitation with SFU, the use of an interactive panel and the format of the World Café style of small group conversations. In some cases, the Multiculturalism and Inclusive Communities Office have played a more prominent role at events in terms of co-facilitation, warm-up activities and closing processes (Williams Lake, Smithers, Abbotsford). In other instances, our role was more behind the scenes (Nanaimo, Powell River).

The meaningful, active role of local artists in the dialogues was frequently considered important to the program.

In all cases, SFU played a significant role in the design of the invitation and on-site programs and ensuring that acknowledgment of local contributors and partners is consistent and each event had a consistently professional appearance.

As well, the Multiculturalism and Inclusive Communities Office worked closely with each community to develop a media plan to ensure pre-event media coverage. In all cases, media attended events and published stories about the process and outcomes.

SFU’s media relations department played an important role in ensuring local and provincial media were notified of events in a professional and consistent manner.

In some instances, the organizing committee also arranged with the local newspapers to run a series of pre-event articles or contests to engage the community around the related issues of multiculturalism, diversity, inclusion, ethnic discrimination and racism.
For the most part, messages to the media were positive and proactive, seeking to gain attention that the events were productive and positive, contributing to community-building and developing sustainable relationships.

3. Conclusions

What’s working well?
Taking time to work with the local planning committee is an important dimension of SFU’s work with host communities. Planning committees have reported a high degree of satisfaction with the support they received and the quality of their planning process, experiences that are sure to have a lasting impact on the community as they continue to plan future projects.

What have we learned?
As a consequence of project activities, there are a number of principles that may be useful for thinking through what we have learned about organizing a dialogue on multiculturalism. These include:

1. Respecting local autonomy also includes challenging norms. While it is essential to approach the dialogue convening with respect and appreciation for the local conditions in which the dialogue is being hosted, it is also important to strongly urge communities to fully embrace the potential of the dialogue to deepen conversation beyond the careful and polite to challenge assumptions.

2. Creating the capacity for dialogue takes time and attention. This means spending some time during the dialogue exploring what makes the session a dialogue (rather than simply a community forum) and how it links to enhancing the lived experience of multiculturalism.

3. Involve diverse members of the community in planning. By ensuring there is wide representation in the planning processes the networks for outreach will be built-in and the process of inviting diverse members of the community will be more successful.

4. Involve more youth in planning. This is necessary if youth are intended to be involved in these sessions.

5. When communities plan with the end in mind, they are likely to have linked the theme and questions of the dialogue with broader strategic directions of the community.

What are the implications for upcoming dialogues?
By reflecting on what works well and the organizing principles we just covered, there are several implications for action for when dialogues are convened.
These include:

1. Encourage host committees to pay greater attention to offering interactive and engaging ways to warm-up participants to the session (icebreakers);
2. Ensure the host committee has follow-up plans in place, to consider findings from the dialogue and a mechanism for reporting out to participants;
3. Encourage the host committee to “stretch” — by inviting the active participation of local artists and experts who are willing to take leadership for outcomes of the sessions, including business and political leaders;
4. Continue to support the committee in understanding the principles of dialogue (see the following guides), the value of asking good questions, and ensuring there is adequate time to share ideas and experiences in greater depth at the dialogue.

The spirit of dialogue is guided by give-and-take in the mutual search for meaning.

Some guides to dialogue include:

- Be generous of spirit — stay open to new ideas and perspectives.
- Be disciplined in your participation — brief, focused and on topic.
- Speak personally — share good stories of living experience rather than set opinions or pet preoccupations.
- Listen past defences, past the familiar and past your certainties.
- Inquire into assumptions — ask: What do you mean? Tell me more…What leads you to believe this…? How are you personally affected?

For those communities who have convened a dialogue on multiculturalism, the overwhelming consensus is these events, while time-consuming and labour-intensive, have been catalytic in creating many new opportunities — new partnerships and relationships, energy and commitment renewal toward ending racial discrimination, and for building the basis of harmonious and respectful communities, where diversity is valued and where all feel welcome and included.
APPENDIX II

DIALOGUE PLANNING CHECKLIST

Planning an occasion for dialogue begins with a clear purpose, organizing questions and an invitation to explore the issue(s) with candour and openness among all participants. This list of items is not meant to be exhaustive, but identifies several of the key steps involved in planning your event.

Pre-Dialogue Considerations

☐ Clarify the purpose of the dialogue event or series.

☐ Identify the composition of the audience. Are the diverse perspectives on the issues or themes represented?

☐ Identify a diverse group of individuals to assist in developing the agenda, as well as to determine speakers, resource people, a moderator and other administrative support.

☐ Develop a program plan that covers: venue, food and refreshments, transportation requirements, audiovisual equipment, the invitation list, and the design and mail-out of the invitations.

☐ Create a media plan. Consider whether the media should be present in the session, what their role is and if speakers’ remarks will be attributed. Is confidentiality a requirement?

☐ Develop an evaluation plan based on your purpose.
APPENDIX III

EVALUATION

1. What did you appreciate about this session?

2. What key theme(s) were most significant to you? Why?

3. What would you have liked more of?

4. Describe the time at which you were most engaged.

5. What ways could the session be improved?

6. How would you rate the quality of participation? (high = 5, low = 1)

7. What did you appreciate about the dialogue facilitation?

8. Additional comments?
APPENDIX IV

MULTICULTURALISM IN CANADA: THE MILESTONES

Below are some of the highlights of Canada’s evolution as a culturally diverse nation.

Prior to 1947
Once Canada became a British colony, immigration policy emphasized assimilation and all people living in Canada were considered to be British subjects regardless of race or culture. However, in the early 1900s with the influx of settlers from non-traditional sources, such as Germany, Poland, the Ukraine, Russia and Italy, the diverse nature of Canadian society was becoming more evident.

1947
The Canadian Citizenship Act is passed, providing a distinct identity for Canadian citizens.

1960
The Bill of Rights is passed, guaranteeing individuals’ rights and responsibilities under the law.

1963
The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism is established.

1967
The Immigration Act is revised, reversing the previous quota system, which gave priority to individuals from white British Commonwealth societies. After acknowledging this policy was discriminatory, a new point system is introduced, which accepts people into Canada based on the needs of society and the skills of individuals.

1969
The Official Languages Act is passed, pursuant to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, establishing English and French as Canada’s official languages in recognition of the country’s two “foundling” groups.

1971
The federal government’s multiculturalism policy is introduced, making Canada the first country in the world to have such a policy. Its mandate is to preserve cultures and to ensure equal access to housing, and economic and social opportunities.

1973
The Supreme Court of Canada first recognizes land rights based on an Aboriginal group’s traditional use and occupancy of land.

1977
Multiculturalism is entrenched in section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

1982
The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognizes and affirms the treaty rights of Aboriginal peoples to protect their cultures, customs, traditions and languages.

1985
Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which addresses the protection of equal rights, is enforced.

1988
The Canadian Multiculturalism Act is passed, making Canada’s multiculturalism policy an act of legislation.

1993
The Multiculturalism Act of British Columbia is passed. This act recognizes the diversity of British Columbians regarding race, cultural heritage, language, religion, ethnicity, ancestry and place of origin, and fosters the creation of a society with no impediments to full participation in B.C.’s economic, social, cultural and political life.

1994
The Government of British Columbia designates the third week of February as an annual multiculturalism week to celebrate the province’s cultural diversity.

1996
The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples presents a comprehensive report to Parliament, which identifies the legal, political, social, economical and cultural issues that need to be addressed to ensure the survival of Canada’s First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The federal government responds with their Aboriginal action plan, Gathering Strength, which is released in 1998.

2002
The Government of Canada designates June 27 as an annual Canadian multiculturalism day to celebrate our country’s rich diversity.

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