

# Cultural Competence in Human Resource Management: Key Issues in Creating Healthy, Effective, Diverse Teams

Nova Scotia Career Development Association Annual  
Conference 2017

Inverary Inn, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

# Who is Robert Wright?

- A RSW Private Practitioner - direct practice and forensics
- Fmr RR-Coord, DDSB
- Fmr Ex. Dir. FCSCC
- Fmr Ex. Dir. NSCYS
- Fmr member NSBS Racial Equity Committee



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# Circle of Safety

- Race and diversity are extremely sensitive issues
- We are all at different stages and levels of our understanding
- To have productive conversations about race and diversity we need to have a “circle of safety”

# Draw a “circle of safety”

- Agree to make this a “culturally safe” space:
  - Allow each other space to ask sincere questions
  - Share from your experience
  - Ask about, don’t avoid sensitive topics
  - Avoid known inflammatory words or phrases (n-word, etc)
- What else can we do to ensure safety?

# Why CC in the Workplace?

- Workplace diversity is a social equity/justice imperative
- Historically excluded populations are rich pool of new employees
- Workplace diversity supports innovation

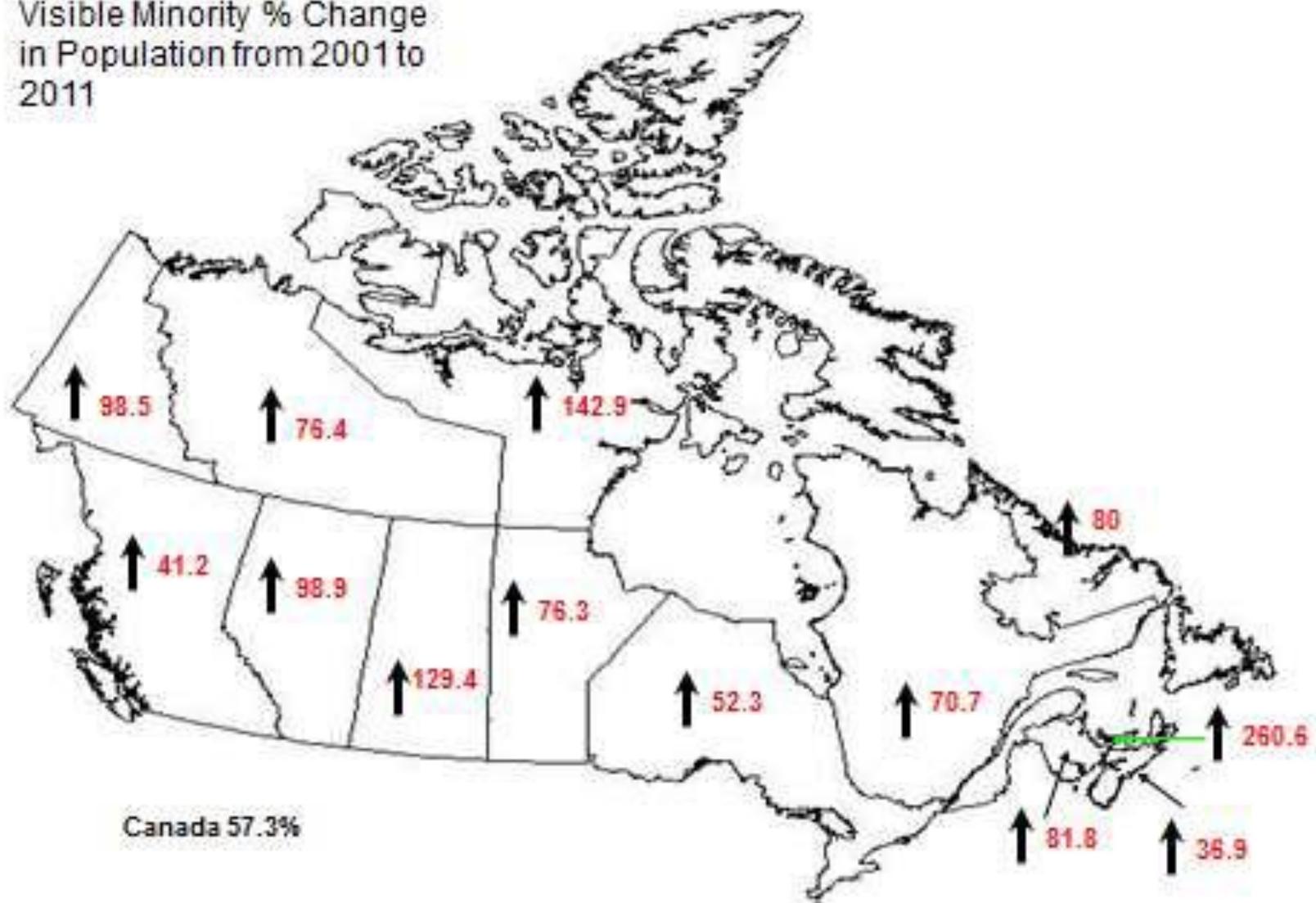
# Your Questions as we Begin

- What must you take from this session in order for it to be of value to you?

# Diverse Teams – Why?

- Under-represented peoples are gaining increasing space in society
- Demographic of Nova Scotia is changing
- Improves our ability to manage complex problems
- Improves business opportunity

Visible Minority % Change  
in Population from 2001 to  
2011



# Tracking the CIBC Online Banking Home Page

A Cultural Competence Project by

Robert S. Wright

March, 2012 – March, 2014

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# How it Started

- Involved with cultural competence since 1988
- Have argued most successful companies appeal to an increasingly diverse population
- Brochures and catalogues illustrate this point
- CIBC online banking website homepage
- Just used the alternating main picture as an illustration
- 22 Images collected over 1 year showing significant diversity



Personal Banking

Business Services

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Bank Accounts

Credit Cards

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Ways to Bank

Your Financial Needs

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Get up to 15,000 Aeroplan® Miles



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Avoid late credit card payments



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### What's new at CIBC

[The first banking app designed specifically for iPad](#)

[Shop online using Visa Debit for a chance to win \\$2,500!](#)

### Online Banking

[Register](#) | [Take a tour](#)

Card Number:

[Delete this card](#)

[Sign on with a different card](#)

Password (case-sensitive):

[Forgot your password?](#)

[Sign On](#)

#### Important notice

We've changed the agreement that governs CIBC Online Banking. By signing on, you agree to the new version. Please review the [Electronic Access Agreement \(2012\)](#).

[Sign on to other sites](#)

### Online security guaranteed

CIBC protects you  
Enhanced browser security

### Find a branch or ABM

Enter address or postal code:

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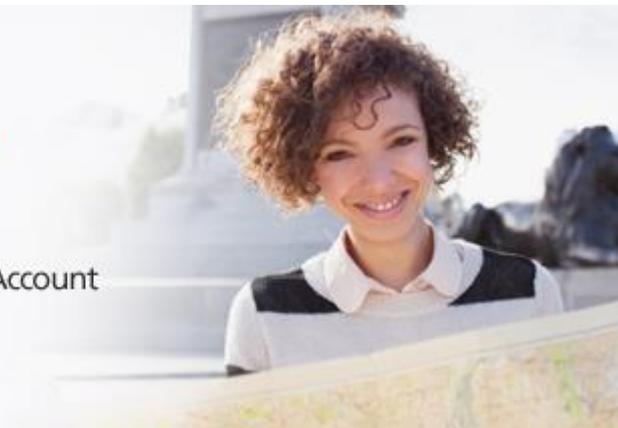


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A promotional banner for CIBC Total Banking Rebate. On the left, a gold ribbon is tied into a bow. To its right, the text 'Bundle your banking and have more in your pocket' is written in a bold, dark red font. Below this, in a smaller black font, it says 'Introducing the new CIBC Total Banking Rebate™'. At the bottom left, there is a red link that says 'Learn more »'. On the right side of the banner is a close-up photograph of a young woman with dark hair in a braid, smiling warmly at the camera. The background of the photo is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

**Bundle your banking and  
have more in your pocket**

Introducing the new  
CIBC Total Banking Rebate™

[Learn more »](#)

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**Transfer-in your mortgage  
and you can get cash back  
and Aeroplan Miles.®**

[Learn more »](#)



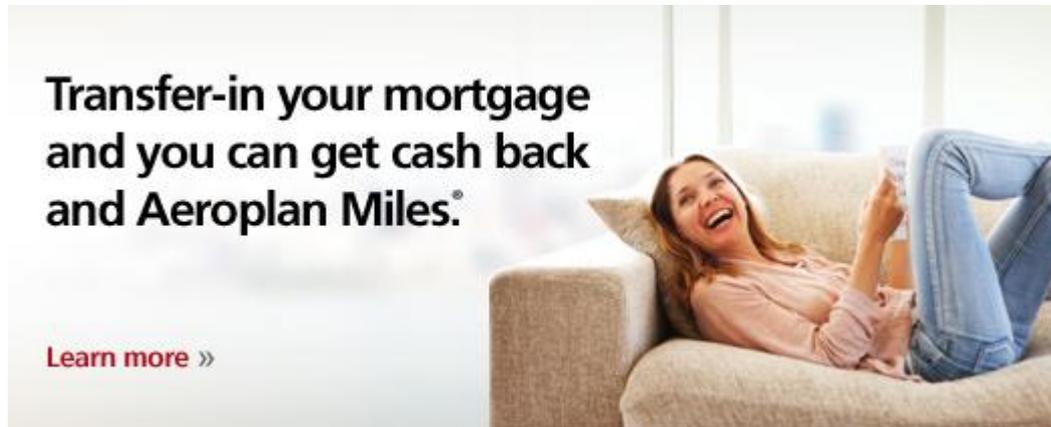
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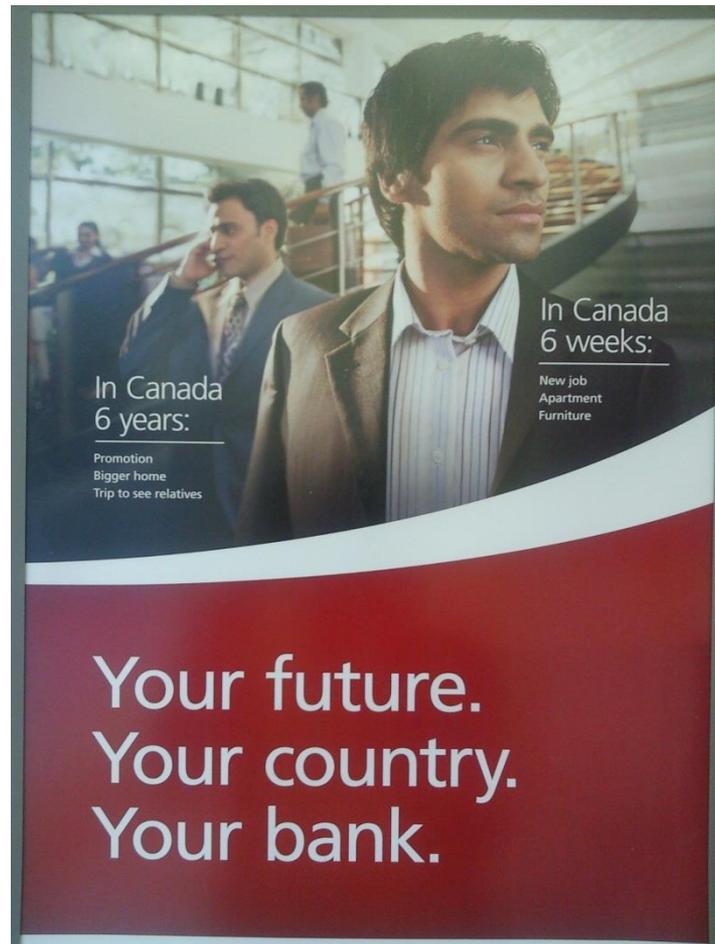


At this point, CIBC made some renovations to their website. Now the main graphic rotates among 3 graphics. This is the only one of the 3 that includes a picture of a person. Let's see how long it takes them to change it since the renovation.

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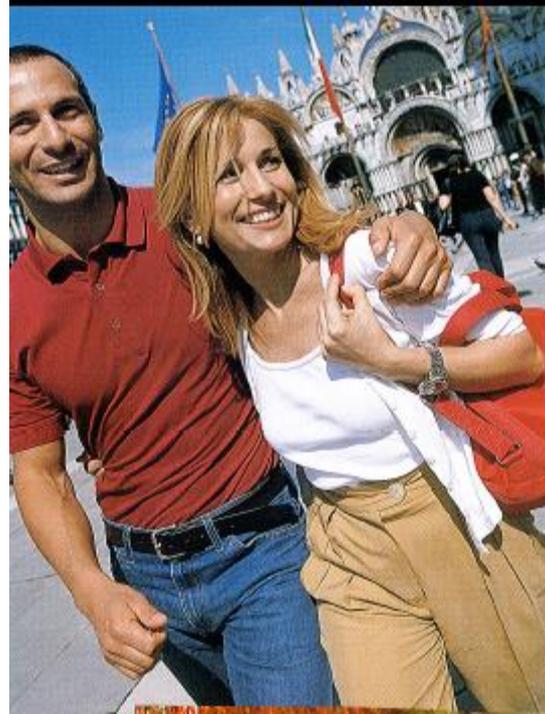
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# Around this time I saw this in a CIBC window downtown



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In the Spring of 2013 I saw a large display of brochures at CIBC. I copied the images off of each separate brochure



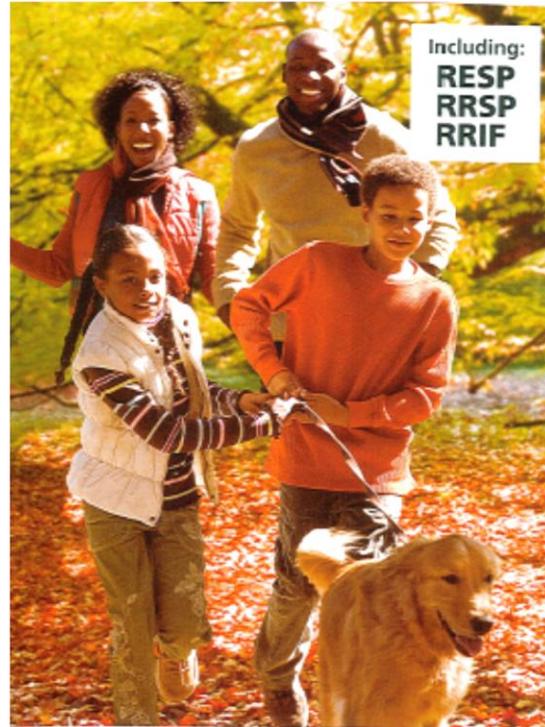
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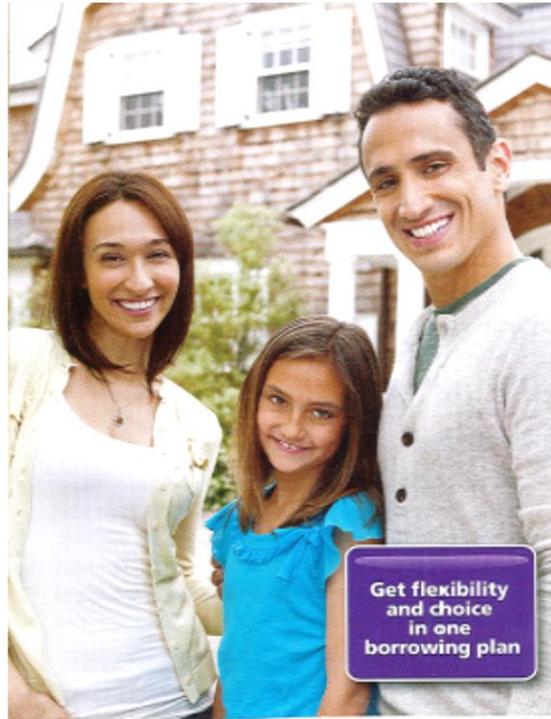
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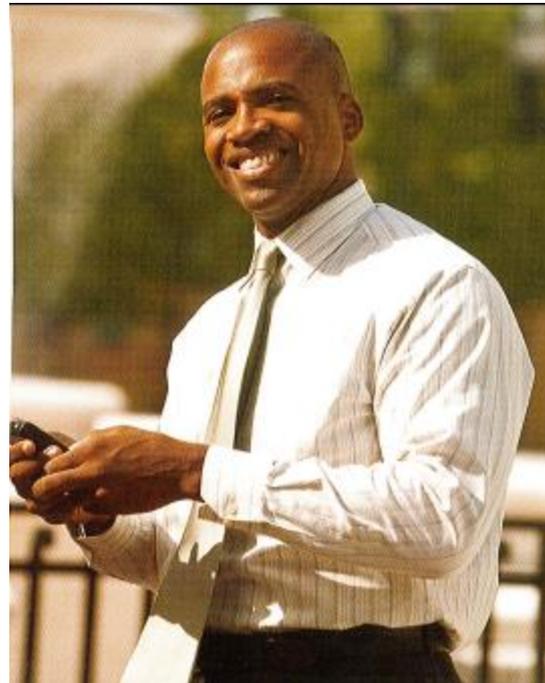
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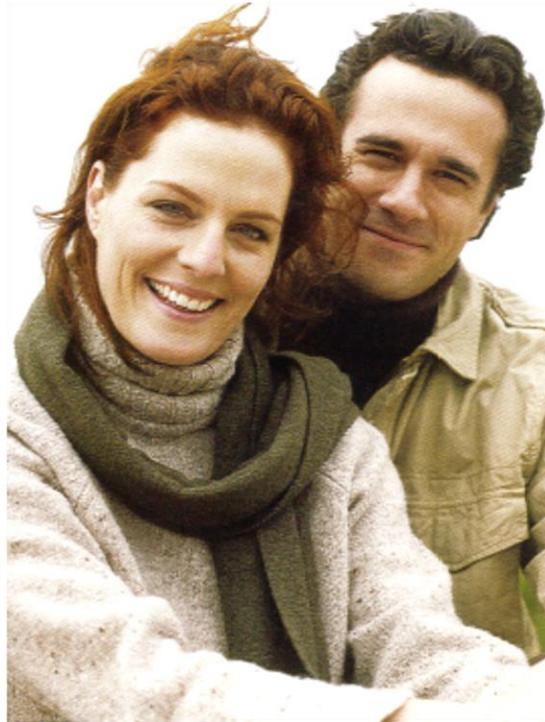
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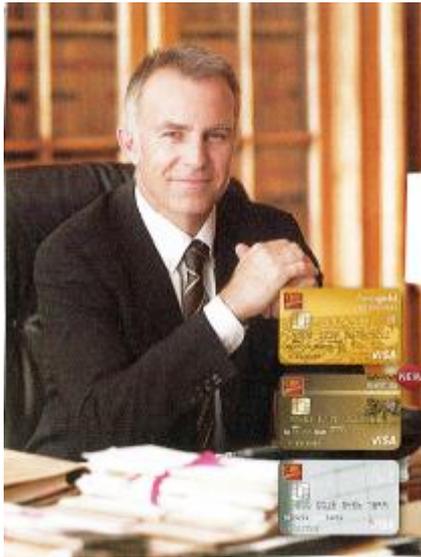
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What do CIBC visuals tell us about them as a company?

# Cultural Competence: Definition

- Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures:
  - A. Understand our own cultural positions and how they differ from others
  - B. Understand the different social and cultural realities we work in
  - C. Cultivate appropriate attitudes towards cultural difference
  - D. Generate and interpret a variety of verbal and non-verbal responses
  - E. Understand structural oppression and commit to social justice

# A) Nichols' Model for Understanding Cultural Difference

Philosophical Perspective on Cultural Difference. Edwin Nichols (cf. work of Jung)

Different world cultures developed out of differing physical environments.

These world views have differing constructs:

- Axiology (values)
- Epistemology (way of knowing)
- Logic (principles of reason)
- Process (practice of reason)

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE DEVELOPED BY EDWIN J. NICHOLS, PH.D.

ETHNIC GROUPS ETHNIC WORLDVIEW	AXIOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY			LOGIC	PROCESS
		APPLIED	PEDAGOGY	METHODOLOGY		
<b>EUROPEAN</b> <b>EURO-AMERICAN</b>	<b>Member-Object</b> The highest value lies in the object or the acquisition of the object	<b>One knows through Counting and Measuring</b>	<b>Parts to Whole</b>	<b>Linear and Sequential</b> <i>-Assembly line-</i>	<b>Dichotomous</b> <i>Either/Or</i> <i>-Newtonian theory-</i>	All sets are repeatable and reproducible <i>-Technology-</i>
<b>AFRICAN</b> <b>AFRICAN AMERICAN</b> <b>LATINO/A</b> <b>ARAB</b>	<b>Member-Member</b> The highest value lies in the relationships between persons	<b>One knows through Symbolic Imagery and Rhythm (function)</b> <i>-Gladwell <u>Blink</u>-</i>	<b>Whole Holistic Thinking</b> <i>-The BIG picture-</i>	<b>Critical Path analysis</b> <i>-Cut to the chase-</i>	<b>Diunital</b> <i>Union of opposites</i> <b>Difrasismo</b> <i>-Aztec thought-</i> <b>The In Between</b> <i>Ibn 'Arabi</i> <i>-Quantum theory-</i>	All sets are interrelated through human and spiritual networks <i>-Black church-</i>
<b>ASIAN</b> <b>ASIAN AMERICAN</b> <b>POLYNESIAN</b>	<b>Member-Group</b> The highest value lies in the cohesiveness of the group	<b>One knows through Transcendental Striving</b> <i>-Tree the forest-</i>	<b>Whole and parts are seen simultaneously</b> <i>-To read a Chinese word-</i>	<b>Cyclical and Repetitive</b> <i>-Stroke order in writing a Chinese word-</i>	<b>Nyaya</b> <i>-The objective world is conceived independent of thought and mind-</i> <i>-Chaos theory-</i>	All sets are independently interrelated in the harmony of the universe <i>-Keiretsu-</i>
<b>NATIVE AMERICAN</b>	<b>Member-Great Spirit</b> The highest value lies in oneness with the Great Spirit	<b>One knows through Reflection and Spiritual Receptivity</b> <i>-Purification rites-</i>	<b>Whole is seen in cyclic movement</b> <i>-Seasons-</i> <i>-Medicine Wheel-</i>	<b>Environmentally experiential reflection</b> <i>-Rites of Passage-</i>	<b>Great Mystery</b> <i>-A set of 4 and a set of 3 form the whole-</i> <i>-Super string theory-</i>	All sets are interrelated through the elements, plant, animal, and spiritual networks <i>-White Buffalo-</i>

# Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- Nichol's Model is consistent with a growing understanding and articulation of Aboriginal Traditional Ecological Knowledge: a practice and belief which concerns itself with the interrelationship of all living things with and within their environment.

# Africentricity

- The assertion of a worldview that places all people of African descent at its centre, asserts a common culture, philosophy, and history, and critiques, and perhaps even rewrites global history from this perspective

## B) Social, Cultural and Historical Context

- North American Diversity is fraught with complicated and tragic history
  - **Enslavement of Africans, Genocide of First Nations, Global strife resulting in trans-global immigration etc.**
- A local knowledge of how our racist history is a living legacy is necessary: Africville, Cornwallis.

# African N. American Social, Cultural and Historical Reality: Begins with . . . European Trade Triangle



# Results in Systemic Issues

- BLAC report links racial discrimination, racial segregation, lack of equal opportunities in education, to “disastrous consequences in employment and access to other services.”

# Results in Psychosocial Injury

- A cluster of social problems and psycho-social phenomena described by Dr. Joy DeGruy as . . .  
Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome:
  - Vacant Esteem (c.f. Peter Bell's concept of Cultural Pain)
  - Ever Present Anger
  - Racist Socialization

# Bell on Cultural Pain

- “The history of slavery, racism, and segregation, added to today's conflicting expectations and pressure of being a(n) . . . African American, all combine to create cultural pain.” (From Hazelden.org’s description of the Bell text)
- The added shame of emasculating un/under-employment, the natural traumatic resistance to servitude, the confusion of perceptions of selling out when one “goes straight”, create a troubling dynamic for ANS employees in culturally incompetent, hostile workplaces

## C) Appropriate Attitudes

- Cultural competence requires that practitioners VALUE diversity.
- In a nation that acknowledges multiple founding peoples, that was built up on the foundation of ethnic/immigrant labour, and whose future depends on immigration, any other attitude should reasonably be seen as unacceptable.

# D) Communicating Across Cultures

- In sociology: the context of a person's world view is necessary for the proper understanding and interpretation of behaviour and rhetoric (Voyvodic, pp. 16, 17)

# Elmar Holenstein

- Before meaningless, unnatural, non-human or immature behaviour and corresponding values are attributed to people of another culture, it is better to begin by doubting the adequacy of one's own judgment and knowledge

# Elmar Holenstein Paraphrased

Before you conclude that I  
am crazy you should consider  
the possibility that you are  
stupid!

# Communicating About Culture

- Cultural competence requires the ability to comfortably and competently ask clients about cultural issues that may be a consideration in the context of your work with them.

# E) Social Justice Commitment

- We must
  - understand the nature of privilege
  - demonstrate an awareness of structural discrimination
  - demonstrate an active anti-racism/anti-discrimination programme
- What does this look like in the workplace?

# 4 Key Questions for Discussion

- How do you recruit under-represented persons to your teams?
- How do you manage the tensions that come with diversity?
- How do you make your diverse team a high performance team?
- How do you ensure the success of under-represented persons on your teams?

# Answers to 4 Key Questions

- Recruitment: Targeted, Meaningful
- Manage tensions: Acknowledge innate hostility, anticipate conflict, provide cc supervision and orientation, provide and find cc support resources
- High performance: Value diversity, understand complexity
- Ensure success: acknowledge structural role of diverse employees and the innate hostility they experience . . . Eliminate micro-aggressions, etc.

# Keeping Sane and as an African Canadian Working in White Institutions: Tips for Surviving and Thriving in Hostile Environments

*Robert S. Wright*

*Presentation and Conversation*

*With IBM Students at the Schulich School of Law*

*October, 2011, reprised and expanded October 2015*

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# What is a Hostile Environment

A hostile work environment exists when:

- Discriminatory behaviour against a protected class exists in the environment
- The behaviour constitutes a persistent pattern
- The behaviour must be severe enough to disrupt the work of the targeted employee(s)
- It is expected that the behaviour will continue if uninterrupted.

# Hostile Environment: Another Consideration

A hostile environment may also be created structurally when a position exists within an institution that has an antagonistic role within the organization. Consider:

- A quality control officer working in a mine
- An SEC officer working within a security firm
- An officer in an institution responsible for investigating claims of harassment or discrimination

# Are Workplaces Hostile Environments?

The BLAC Report, Marshall Enquiry and other reports and studies acknowledge that racism is at work in Nova Scotia and that systemic racism accounts for the “deplorable economic conditions” of ANS.

Given this systemic racism, it stands to reason that as agents of systemic change, racialized employees are defacto change agents and are in structural conflict within the workplace

# How do you Stay Sane in a Hostile Environment?

I have developed a 6 point plan for my personal sanity preservation (you can be the judge of my success):

- Identity
- Competence/Excellence
- Analysis
- Independence
- Process
- Action

# Cultural Competence: How?

- Pre service training/internships/apprenticeships
- Conduct organizational assessment of Cultural Competence
- Develop organizational plan to increase Cultural Competence
- Employ and support culturally competent (not just culturally diverse) practitioners as agents of change
- **Make available systematic coaching/ consulting and support services, internal and external**
- Provide continuing education in Cultural Competence

# Cultural Competence: How Not

- Do not place the responsibility for cultural competence solely on the shoulders of “diverse” staff – particularly when these persons are among the most junior persons on staff.
- Do not confuse cultural celebrations for cultural competence training.

# **Cultural Competence in Human Resource Management: Key Issues in Creating Healthy, Effective, Diverse Teams**

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