



# Nurturing Diversity and Building Inclusive Workplaces Initiative

Lori Shortreed & Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative Ltd.

Edmonton Workforce Council

Alberta Council of Disability Services



## Diversity

- Diversity is the range of human differences. Each person has layers of diversity which makes his/her perspective unique. It is an important dimension of our **Identity** as individuals and as members of groups.
- Diversity includes the dimensions of “race”, ethnicity, and national and regional origins; sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation; socioeconomic status, age, physical attributes, and abilities; as well as religious, political, cultural, and intellectual ideologies and practices. (Gupta, 1995)



# We ARE Diverse

The workforce has rapidly diversified along all dimensions of diversity including:

- Culture and language
- Professional and educational background
- Experience and familiarity with the sector's workplace norms and expectations
- Perspectives about disability (cultural/age/occupational)

The sector needed to understand and integrate this into the “how” and the “why” of what we do!



# Why does diversity matter?

- **WHO** are “you” – as a sector, an organization, an employer, employee – let alone the people you support?
- What are the impacts and implications of diversity for each organization’s ability to meet its mandate to community and to its employees?
  - Recruitment, Orientation, Training, Supervision and Management
  - Relationship(s)
    - within the organization
    - between workers and those they support
    - between workers and families



# What is Culture?

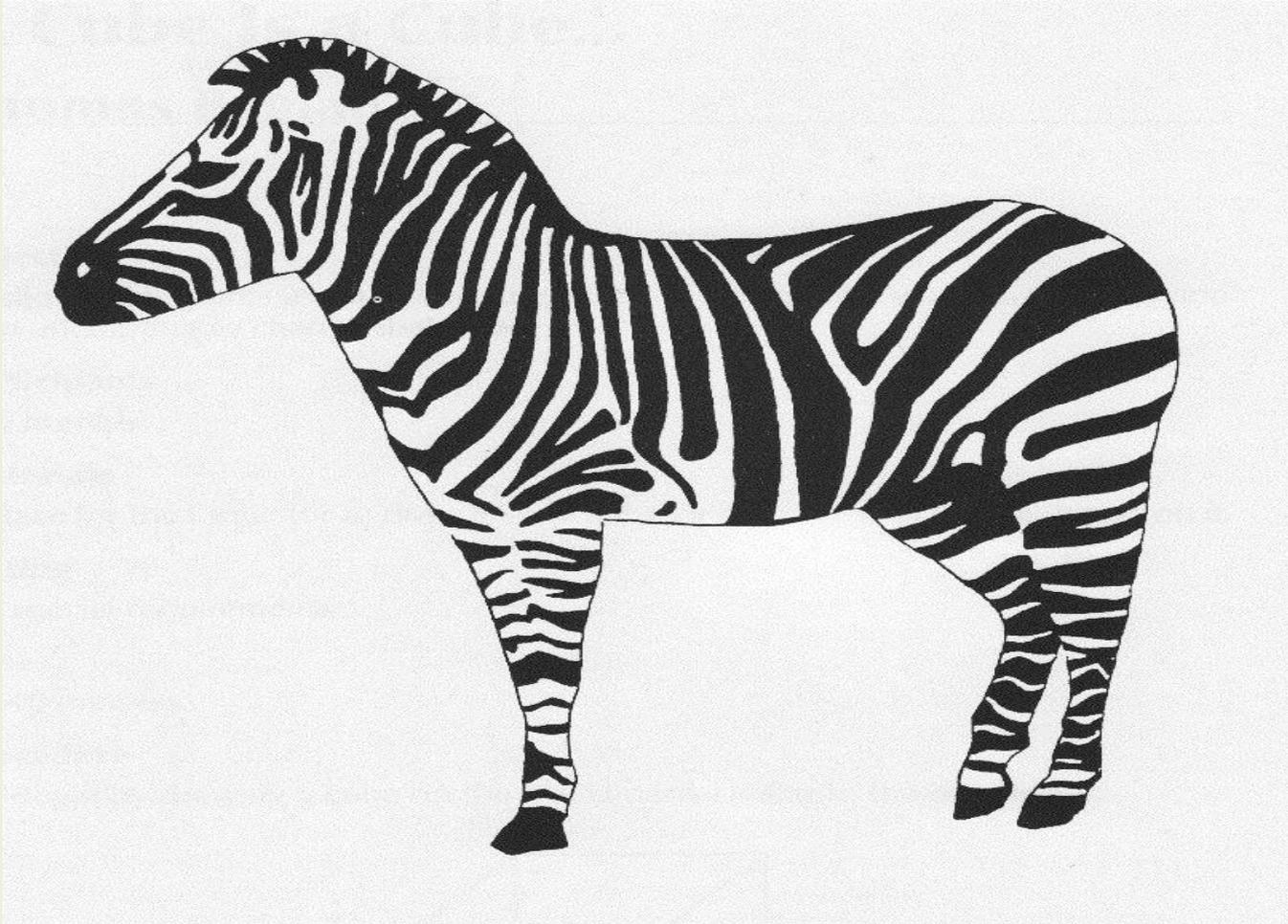
Culture is understood as the dynamic and evolving socially constructed reality that exists in the minds of social group members. **It is the 'normative glue'** that allows group members to communicate and work effectively together.

(Hudelson, 2004)



## Key points about culture

- Culture is learned
- Culture is shared
- Within *every* group there is considerable cultural diversity
- Culture is dynamic
- Most cultural knowledge is outside of our awareness



**What colour are the Zebra's stripes?**



- In studies done in the USA, the majority of “white” participants described the Zebra as a white animal with black stripes...
- The majority of “black” participants described the Zebra as a black animal with white stripes...

*We don't see things as they are,  
we see them as we are. - Anais Nin*

(Hubbard, 1996)



## Project Background

- The Nurturing Diversity and Building Inclusive Workplaces Initiative was a two phase, 2 year project
  - Phase 1 - 2009-10
  - Phase 2 - 2011-12
- Funded by Alberta Employment & Immigration (AE & I)
- Administered by the Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) in partnership with Edmonton Workforce Council and the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative Ltd. (MCHB Co-op).



## Phase I

### **Edmonton Workforce Council**

- Significant staff changes occurred in the workforce.
- The majority of new staff drawn from the newcomer communities.

### **Rationale & Purpose**

- A need for improved communication, teamwork, and understanding of the sector's philosophy, practice and workplace culture.
- Purpose of the initiative was to build inclusive and culturally competent workplaces to support and retain a diverse workforce.



## Participants

- Three medium/large scale Edmonton area service providers:
  - Chrysalis: An Alberta Society for Citizens with Disabilities
  - SKILLS Society
  - Excel Society

## Process

- Action research, participatory process tailored to meet the needs of the participating organizations and the sector.



# Intercultural processes & practices

When workers are unaware of the value systems of the service providers, persons they support and their families, a disconnection can occur, creating serious ethical dilemmas and problematic outcomes. (McGonagle, et al, 2004)



## Project Scope

The Nurturing Diversity Initiative created specialized training and organizational capacity building that was tailored to the needs of the sector and the individual organizations. It was geared toward:

- building staff inter/cultural competency;
- developing awareness & relationship
- reducing misunderstanding & miscommunication;
- building staff morale and confidence; and,
- common understanding & adherence to sector/industry philosophy, practice & standards of care.



## Process & Framework: Diversity Strategies

Diversity strategies ensure that the differences found in a diverse workforce are valued and managed appropriately.

Managing Diversity recognizes that valuing individual differences means **employees may require different management styles**. The objective here is not creating a diverse workforce but rather creating an environment in which all employees can work to their full potential - **an inclusive organization**. No employee experiences advantages or disadvantages. (Poole, 1997)



## Synergies

Diversity management fits well with the community disability service sectors' underlying values to promote inclusion for persons with disabilities.

However,

- Diversity strategies require a shift in thinking to broaden and deepen organizational understanding of **what inclusion, inclusive communities, and inclusive organizations can be.**



# Developing an Intercultural Organization/Sector

A life-long interest and commitment to:

- Acknowledge, respect and respond to cultural differences in respectful and constructive ways
- Learn about others and yourself
- Grow and transform as an individual, community, organization in the process



## Phase I - Process, Principles, Design

### **Collaborative. participatory, engaged**

- collective responsibility, information sharing on an ongoing basis with all those involved in the diversity project.
  - Advisory Committee & Organizational Initiative Teams

### **Action Research**

Build on knowledge and strengths of participants and organizations, integrate information gained on an ongoing basis.

- **Mini-ethnography approach:** participant/observation, interviews, focus groups...
- **Pilot Training:** Involved prospective training participants in the planning, design and evaluation of the training and the final resource materials.



- Build **knowledge** about diversity and introduce the concept of **diversity education/consciousness**.
- Provide a model of **intercultural sensitivity** to stimulate awareness of the relation between **attitudes, values and behaviour** when confronted with diversity.
- Chart the opportunity ahead to develop the **awareness, knowledge and skills** we need for intercultural competency.



## Approach: Emic & Etic

- The **emic** approach is defined as the insiders' perspective on culture (from within a specific culture), which provides insight into cultural nuances and complexities...
- The **etic** approach, based on outsiders' account of cultures, for example, viewing them as collectivistic or individualistic ... [w]hile helpful ... to a certain degree, it does not convey the complexity found within cultures. (Zhu 2013)



# Intercultural Competence & Disability

- Requires surfacing personal, cultural, professional, and sectoral beliefs about disability.
  - Unpacking / understanding different approaches to the “work” of disability
- Developing “bridging” mechanisms to support learning/application of organizational and sectoral philosophy and requirements for practice.



# Intercultural Competence & Disability

The community disability services sector is not “culture-free”. The philosophy, ideology, beliefs, and professional standards of care are the “unique products of specific historic, political, social and economic developments”.  
(Groce, 2004)



# Cultural Perspectives of Disability

- The concept and experience of disability is different across cultures.
- There is neither a unified concept of disability nor a direct translation of the word in many languages.
- It is important to recognize the differing ways by which disability is framed and understood in many cultures:



# Cultural Elements

- **Definition of disability** - how individuals see themselves, world around them, and how it affects the way families and communities interact with them.
- **Causality** - the cultural explanation that determines how an individual is treated in society.
- **How society treats people with disability** - assigns values and meanings to different kinds of disability with the resulting status and rights of individuals.



- **Disability services system** - how societies develop and implement policies and programs to meet the needs of the disability sector (or the lack of such policies and programs).
- **Role of the individual, family, community and professional** in working with/providing services for the individual/family with disability.



## Cultural Lenses

- **What are the implications for your work with diverse team members, individuals and families?**
  - HOW would you describe the key values and concepts currently shaping the sector?
  - HOW would you describe your organizational culture?
  - HOW will you need to adapt your organizational and client focused practices?
  - WHO will you need to involve?



# Our Conceptual Suitcase

- What words or terms in the workplace do you believe have different meanings for different co-workers?
- In what context do these communication differences most often occur?



Caregivers often say to themselves that, “Not everyone can be a caregiver. It takes passion; you have to like taking care of people. Not everyone is cut out that way”. In caregiving, the emotional dimension is far more complex than the sheer physical job of helping someone get out of bed routinely, brush their teeth, and getting them to various appointments while making sure that they are ‘toileted’ every two hours. (Kao 2010).



**Care ..... Support**



# Findings/Recommendations

## Organizational Goals

### A. Improve communication and teamwork

- Understanding of Workplace culture
  - Roles and responsibilities
    - Decision making and initiative
  - Effective means and models for supervision, including constructive feedback and discipline
  - Workplace culture requirements (e.g., punctuality, boundaries)
  - Communication in the workplace – interaction, terminology, jargon, documentation, jargon

**RECOMMENDATION:** Mentorship, expanded and tailored on-boarding/training, and specialized tools



## **B. Recruitment, Retention, Promotion**

To support inclusive organizations and provide professional quality supports organizations must improve methods for recruitment, retention and advancement of their diverse staff. This is a complex process that requires resources and expertise to develop explicit, intentional and creative strategies that are integrated into organizational culture.

### **Recommendations/Specific issues addressed/steps taken:**

- Modified interviewing process and tools:
- Modified evaluation and feedback process:
- Modified orientation and foundational training:
- Welcoming environment



## **B. Strengthen policy to support respect for a diverse workplace.**

**RECOMMENDATION:** Develop policy and procedures to address emerging racism in interactions between staff, between staff, family members and the people they support



## **C. Ensure understanding and compliance with workplace requirements and standards of care**

- Risk Management – “we have a responsibility to serve people and we have concerns that miscommunication or misunderstanding can lead to issues in care” (e.g., medications, occupational health, etc.)



## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Inter/cultural competence training**
- **Integration of intercultural philosophy/practices and procedures into organizational culture**
- Common understanding of sector and organizational philosophy(s) and model(s) of practice
- Sector and organizational “lense” and “lexicon” (e.g., support/care)



## Phase I Lessons Learned

- All levels of leadership need to be engaged in the diversity management process
- Organizational readiness and senior management commitment should be carefully assessed and promoted throughout the diversity management process.
- Diversity management strategies and training needs to be sector relevant
- Training needs to be experientially based
- Cultural sharing is a valuable organizational development tool
- Cultural brokering is a key element in diversity training
- The sensitivity of diversity requires a commitment to building trust within the organization



## Outcomes

- **Toolkit / resource manual** outlining a overarching diversity management process, training materials and supporting resources, best practices and additional resources and tools.
- A **network of practice** within the sector that nurtures a diverse workforce and supports cultural competent workplaces.
- A **resource list** of good connectors and materials for the sector.



## Phase II 2011-2012

Phase II was a continuation of the learning developed during Phase I (2010). Using the process learning and *Nurturing Diversity in the Workplace* toolkit developed in Phase I, the project expanded to involve additional agencies in cross-learning to support diversity knowledge of agency staff & across the sector. The project supported practical application of diversity management skills through training, coaching, mentorship, and **project development**.



# Principles & Design

- 1. Project Leadership - Advisory Committee**
- 2. Project Coordination – MCHB Co-op**
- 3. Organizational Commitment**
  - Invitation to Participate
  - CEO/Executive Director leadership of an Organizational Initiative Team
  - Management support for a two (2) person Project Team



### 3. Project Design

- micro needs assessment
- diversity management workshop(s);
- diversity management project design, development and implementation within each organization;
- co-learning opportunities for Project Team members
- Documentation of practices that will foster career growth and allow agencies to retain a culturally diverse workforce
- Establishment of a network of practice within the sector



## Overview of Diversity Projects

Each of the six organizations chose projects that would help them to learn more about the diversity within their organizations.

- Cultural audits
- Focus group sessions with various levels of their staff
- Tailored diversity training sessions
- Teamwork/building: potlucks, activities, world maps
- Strategic approach to the integration of diversity management into their broader visions for organizational learning and development.
- Frameworks to make explicit and to clarify organizational values, mission and work, as well as requirements for job performance
- Organizational and human resource support staff affected by racism and discrimination
- Network of support and knowledge transfer



## Lessons Learned

***The core of an inclusive organization is the quality and integrity of its relationships***

- The importance of leadership and commitment from the top to fully engage in.
- The value of distributing involvement in the initiative
- The benefits of diversity training as a means to stimulate awareness and interest in exploring diversity issues.
- The value of integrating diversity management into the broader vision and policies of the organization.
- The importance of engaging staff in the diversity management process as a means to promote engagement and to create a common ground
- The necessity to name, to explore, and address the impacts of racism and discrimination in the workplace.



## References

- Groce, N. (2005). Immigrants, disability & rehabilitation. In J. H. Stone (Ed.) *Culture and disability: Providing culturally competent services* (pp. 1-14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Hopkins, B. (2009). *Cultural differences and improving performance: how value and beliefs influence organizational performance*. Farnham, Surrey: Gower Publishing Limited.
- Hubbard, A. (1996). The Zebra's Stripes. In H.N. Seelye (Ed.) *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning* (pp. 33-37). Maine: Intercultural Press.
- Hudelson, Patricia M. (2004). *Culture and quality: an anthropological perspective*, *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* Volume 16, Number 5 (2004): p. 345.



- McGonagle, Catherin, O'Halloran, Siobahn, O'Reilly, Orla (2004). *The expectations and experiences of Filipino nurses working in an intellectual disability service in the Republic of Ireland*. Journal of Learning Disabilities. 2004 SAGE PUBLICATIONS London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi VOL 8(4) 371–381
- Poole, P.J. (1997). *Diversity, A Business Advantage: A practical guide*. Ajax, Ontario: Poole Publishing Company.
- Jezewski, M.A. & Sotnik, P. (2005). Culture and the disability services. In J.H. Stone (Ed.) *Culture and disability: Providing culturally competent services* (pp.15-36). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zhu, Yunxia, Bargiela-Chiappini, Francesca (2013). *Balancing Emic and Etic: Situated Learning and Ethnography of Communication in Cross-Cultural Management Education*. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 2013, Vol. 12, No. 3, 380–395.