

EDUCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

As classrooms become increasingly diverse, teachers are faced with the challenge of creating meaningful learning experiences for students with different beliefs, traditions and backgrounds.

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A parents' guide has been written to complement this teachers' guide. Together, these two resources aim to promote human rights education and understanding among children and youth with the intention of bridging the gap between school and home. Diverse communities call for new approaches to educating and promoting human rights and these resources provide tangible starting points for creating a culture of respect and understanding.

EDUCATING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS:

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



PUBLISHED BY:

Indo-Canadian
Women's Association



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**Indo-Canadian Women's Association
For women's rights and social justice**

The Indo-Canadian Women's Association is located in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. ICWA promotes integration of immigrants, helps them to overcome the multiple challenges they encounter in settling down in a new country. ICWA's mission is to encourage participation by new Canadians in social, economic and political life in Canada.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



John Humphrey Centre

*for Peace and Human Rights
pour la paix et les droits de la personne*

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Human Rights,
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I am a Canadian of ancestry in India, the country of my birth, and a proud Canadian. I have spent my public life in finding points of reconciliation, where we engage in an ongoing intercultural dialogue to reconcile our own notions of who we are, with the society we choose to call home. This gives me a certain perspective on the centrality of inclusion, pluralism and diversity in creating a vision of human rights that will resonate with parents, students and teachers in Alberta and in Canada.

There is not and should not be any fundamental conflict between an inclusive notion of human rights, and the deep wells of compassion, coexistence, and peace in every human culture. My act of becoming Canadian enabled me to contribute substantially to the national discourse of what it should mean to be one.

A generation ago, I was among a vanguard of Canadians from diverse origins worried that official multicultural policy served to put people in ghettos, to encourage a benign apartheid wherein cultures were separate and equal. The fundamentally hollow concept of "tolerance" only invited acceptance of something, it did not lead to sharing, discovery and ultimately celebration. We worried about the future of a cultural mosaic where every piece in the mosaic was separate and apart from the others.

We believed there could be a means of preserving seminal identities while sharing our lives and experiences with one another. This sat more comfortably in a country that did not believe in forcing assimilation into some overarching national mythos, as was the experience south of the border in the United States. We were working to reshape a 1970s and early 1980s milieu where "multiculturalism" was defined as giving grants to ethnic and cultural associations to propagate and perpetuate their own traditions.

We believed that this would ultimately lead to an abundance of solitudes, if there was no attempt to share across cultures, across ethnicity, across religion. And in this context, we worked to shape Canada as a grand inclusion, in which one could maintain the bonds of heritage and ancestry while bringing them to reshape a dynamic and evolving Canadian identity.

In the early 1980s I wrote an article in *The Edmonton Journal*, titled “Multiculturalism: A Kindly Apartheid?” and was roundly condemned by readers. The subject was so emotional that I could not successfully communicate my intent — to ensure the participation of all those cultural solitudes in the crafting of our collective future. Yet those thoughts of inclusion prevailed and ultimately succeeded in the following years.

The future evoked by so many of us fighting for a different country, now exists in my modern Canada. A generation later, my country is one of pluralism, multiple identities, cultural sharing, and a surging confidence in our young.

Learning about human rights is really an endeavour to build human capacity, both individually and in communities, and to enable the blossoming of human potential. When humans are happy, safe and secure, they will be better citizens, better consumers, better employees and better customers.

Apart from a handful of egregious regimes, few governments would actively impose policies of fear and deprivation on the people they purport to serve. There can be no accusations of wrongdoing in advancing the ability of women, men, boys and girls to live together in community with dignity—the natural “deliverable” of a human rights framework based on freedom from fear and freedom from want.

Human rights are not a “western imposed” value unless human dignity is a “western value.” In this context, the Emperor Asoka in pre-Christian India posited non-violence as a way of life, and the foundational notion of harmony in Confucian “great learning” is an essential foundation of “freedom from fear and freedom from want.” In this context, human rights is “too political” in the sense that any organized human society is “too political.”

We may need to move away from a term like human rights, and think of it as “the right to be human.” This implies a birthright that exists beyond legal codes, governments and governance, and speaks to the human birthright to live together in dignity and in community.

The classroom is the place where we build community, in Alberta and in Canada. The strongest communities are built on love, acceptance, compassion, generosity, and the intense human desire to share what is best in us. I believe this Guide makes an invaluable contribution to our process of being, belonging, and becoming.

– Satya Das

As classrooms become increasingly diverse, teachers are faced with the challenge of creating meaningful learning experiences for students with different beliefs, traditions and backgrounds.

This guide provides teachers with strategies in human rights education that encourage an appreciation of diversity in our communities and classrooms as well as support educators in integrating cross-cultural values across all subject areas. It also integrates meaningful opportunities that assist teachers in addressing discrimination and promoting respect and responsibility in their classroom.

Section one seeks to provide background information on several human rights frameworks and discusses the concept of human rights as cross-cultural values relevant to all citizens. This section grounds and provides contextualization for the remainder of the guide.

Section two describes several current human rights issues, providing background information for each issue and supported with a discussion of how the issue may impact students. Following each issue is a list of activities, ideas and resources that teachers can use to introduce human rights concepts in the classroom.

This teachers' guide is aimed at upper elementary grades, however teachers of lower elementary and junior high school may find the information useful to integrate into activities in their classrooms. Many of the activities can be adapted to suit a range of ages and subjects.

A parents' guide has been written to complement this teachers' guide. Together, these two resources aim to promote human rights education and understanding among children and youth with the intention of bridging the gap between school and home. Diverse communities call for new approaches to educating and promoting human rights and we believe these resources provide tangible starting points for creating a culture of respect and understanding.

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WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Human rights can be defined as rights that are innate and which we cannot live without. Human rights ensure all people have access to basic needs such as food, clean water, healthcare and shelter as well as protection from violence, deprivation and suffering. They also allow people the freedom to fulfill other needs like education, employment, social interaction and the pursuit of happiness.

Human rights are based on the belief that people should be able to determine their own destiny. They represent the fundamental components in life that all individuals should have to develop to their full potential.

Human rights are universal. They transcend borders, cultures, ideologies and religious beliefs.

Human rights are indivisible and interconnected. For all to live a life of well-being, all human rights need to be considered, promoted and protected. Without one, this affects the ability of an individual to secure others.

Human rights are reciprocal. They go hand in hand with responsibility. This means exercising one's own rights cannot interfere with the rights of others. It also means that cultural rights should not violate individual rights.

Human rights preserve human dignity. They help to ensure that all humans treat one another with respect. It also means that the consequences for breaking the law must be humane. Consequences should never humiliate, hurt or deprive individuals.

WHY ARE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPORTANT?

As the world becomes more globalized, societies become more interconnected. Communities traditionally inhabited by a single culture have over time begun to resemble the world village, with people representing a variety of backgrounds, religions and abilities all living together in one society. Educating citizens to effectively work, play and communicate with one another within this diverse climate has thus become imperative.

Human rights education fosters the appreciation of diversity within an environment of respect, responsibility and dignity. Essentially, human rights education prepares students to act as citizens, both locally and globally. In order for diverse cultures to effectively and respectfully interact with one another, their citizens must learn new social skills and experience culturally universal responsibilities. Learning about human rights and cross-cultural values will help our children and youth learn these social skills and experience these universal responsibilities. These opportunities will help them relate to people from different religions, races, socioeconomic status and ethno-cultural backgrounds. In the future, the children of today will be engaging more and more with people of other cultures and abilities. Education for human rights and diversity will help bridge the gap between 'us' and 'them', fostering common citizenship and a culture of inclusion.

KEY HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORKS

Human rights have been shaped by the struggle for dignity, freedom and equality around the world. Human rights legislation and frameworks define the parameters for human rights and grant them formal recognition. These instruments also create a framework for the protection of human rights. There are a number of key human rights frameworks that outline the rights of individuals in Canada.

UNITED NATIONS' UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The establishment of the United Nations (UN) following the turmoil and atrocities of the Second World War was sparked by the international community's desire to create a forum to prevent the recurrence of such appalling events.

One of the first major achievements of the United Nations was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), detailing the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every being. The Declaration recognizes that the "inherent dignity ... of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

There are 30 Articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which cover six different categories of human rights:

- Political (such as the right to vote and to participate in government)
- Civil (such as the right to freedom of opinion and expression)

- Equality (such as the right to be free from discrimination)
- Economic (such as the right to fair wages and safe working conditions)
- Social (such as the right to education and to adequate health care)
- Cultural (such as the right to speak your native language)

These are inherent rights to be enjoyed by all (women, men, children and all groups in society, whether disadvantaged or not). They are not privileges to be withdrawn, withheld or granted at someone else's whim or will.

The UDHR itself is a standard for countries to follow but is not a document that is legally binding. Countries that have signed the Declaration cannot be held legally responsible in the face of human rights violations or disregard. The UDHR simply expresses the basic principles and ideals that the world holds for every human being to live a life of dignity and well-being.

UNITED NATIONS' CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Recognizing that some individuals have unique needs based on their marginalized or unique position in society, the United Nations has advanced the development of conventions and documents that allow these individuals specific protections to support their dignity and well being.

One of these adaptations has resulted in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC or UNCRC). Aside from the UDHR, the CRC is the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history. The UN recognizes that as the most vulnerable segment of society, children require special measures for protection and support to ensure their human rights are upheld.

By ratifying this instrument, 193 national governments have committed to protecting and ensuring children's rights. They have agreed to hold their nations accountable for this commitment before the international community. They are obliged to develop policies and apply actions that reflect the best interests of all children and embrace the articles enshrined in the convention.

The CRC is a universally agreed upon set of non-negotiable standards and obligations. Contrary to the UDHR, the CRC is a legally binding international instrument. The CRC spells out basic universal human

rights every child deserves, incorporating the full range of rights: civil, political, equality, economic, social and cultural. The Convention protects children's rights by setting benchmarks of progress in areas such as health care, education and legal, civil and social services. It explicitly declares that children have the right to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. It also protects a child's right to participate in family, community, education, culture and social life.

Canada ratified the Convention in 1991. While the government has not yet fully implemented the Convention into domestic legislation, a number of programs, policy strategies and action plans have been initiated to enhance the well being of children in Canada. For example, the Canadian government established the National Child Benefit system in 1997 to reduce child poverty. As well, several ministries and departments within the federal and provincial governments have created children and youth divisions to oversee relevant programming and to ensure that children and youth are not forgotten. The detailed reports to the United Nations by the Canadian Government are available on the Canadian Heritage website at www.pch.gc.ca

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

This Convention is one among many other conventions and declarations made that support specific populations in society and recognize their unique needs and challenges. Most of these conventions are not legally binding on countries, but represent standards for governments to aspire to ensuring all their citizens have access to a life of well-being and dignity.

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Falling under the Constitution Act of 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms encompasses many aspects of human rights and was developed in efforts of making the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a reality for Canadians. The Charter sets out rights and freedoms that are necessary in a free and democratic society and provides a basis for legal protection of rights in Canada. Some of the rights and freedoms include:

- The freedom of expression.
- The right to a democratic government.
- The right to live and to seek employment anywhere in Canada.
- The right to equality, including the equality of men and women.
- The right to use either of Canada's official languages.
- The protection of Canada's multicultural heritage.
- The legal rights of individuals accused of crimes.

While the Charter allows all Canadians to freely express themselves in language, religion, culture and belief, it also imposes responsibilities on all its citizens to not violate the rights of others. The rights and freedoms listed under the Canadian Charter are constitutional rights that all Canadian citizens are entitled to and bound by. These rights cannot be denied in the home or in the public domain.

PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

Each province and territory has its own separate human rights statute, act or code. These are intended to protect people from discriminatory actions and practices.

In Alberta, each individual is protected from discrimination under the Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act. This includes discrimination based on gender, marital status, ancestry, race, colour, place of origin, ethnicity, religious belief, family status, physical disability, mental disability, age, source of income and sexual orientation.

HUMAN RIGHTS AS CROSS CULTURAL VALUES

The universality of human rights does not always hold true to the current conditions of human rights in many parts of the world, including Canada. The vision is hampered by a number of factors, one of which is the clash between particular customs and social norms and

the empowering principles of human rights. Many traditions exist that undermine certain human rights. Cultures rooted in ancient beliefs still practice customs and norms that value one group of people while violating the rights of all others. These practices preserve a social hierarchy which in itself contradicts equality.

As the world becomes more connected, we come closer to a place where discriminatory customs give way to practices that value all people equally; a place where human rights laws actually keep everyone in the world safe and secure; and, a place where global values connect citizens from around the world.

Until the day that humanity shares these common ideals, pleas to respect human dignity must be based on legal justifications. People of all cultures and backgrounds understand the importance of following the law and when people travel to a new country, they need to learn about the laws and customs of the region in order to fit in, show respect and enjoy the experience. In Canada, this means following the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Newcomers to Canada are introduced to the Charter as part of their citizenship testing to become a landed immigrant. The Indo-Canadian Women's Association has also created the **Embracing Human Rights in Canada: A Guide for Parents** to provide support to immigrant families with school-aged children. It is aimed at encouraging the retention of tradition and culture while adapting to life in Canada. This complementary guide encourages dialogue to promote understanding and can be used to help newcomers understand the different cultural and social norms their children may be learning in Canadian schools.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN TRANSFORMATIVE HUMAN RIGHTS

While globalization has changed how people from around the world interact with one another, private family life within many cultures has maintained its traditional influence. This means that many children in Canada grow up in bicultural environments, where family life and school life are situated within two separate cultures. While many students become proficient in shifting between conflicting norms and codes of conduct, others struggle with the tension of being entrenched in two opposing belief systems. At home, these children live in a culture deeply

rooted in a traditional way of life. Gender, age and other forms of discrimination may be acceptable in their culture under the guise of tradition. Gender roles are usually predefined and strictly adhered to, and punishment may be physical. Conversely, at school these students are expected to be open-minded, value independence and live the “Canadian” way of life.

For teachers and other adults helping children balance the tension and lessen the anxiety that comes from embracing contradictory beliefs and practices, it is important to understand where these beliefs stem from. For example, in some cultures, the preference for males is rooted in ancient religious teachings. In Confucian societies, men were granted special status because they were believed to carry the family’s bloodline. In other early societies, traditional gender roles developed for more practical reasons. Men and women had separate responsibilities based on ability. Traditionally, women in most cultures naturally assumed the role of nurturer while the men provided food and shelter for the family. Families relied on sons to help with the physical work on family farms while daughters helped their mothers indoors. As women were busy with the household, mobility became a privilege that only men could enjoy. Some theories suggest hierarchies based on socioeconomic status and occupation developed naturally as people of similar status and occupation worked, lived and socialized together.

While life in traditional societies may still support this division, life in Canada encourages a greater degree of integration and cooperation. Regardless of family life and culture, people from diverse backgrounds come together at school, in the workplace and in the community to work together respectfully toward common goals. As they enter the workforce themselves, our children will experience even more diversity as people from around the world become more mobile and as previously male-dominated professions open up to women.

Human rights education will ensure each student has an understanding of his or her own rights and responsibilities as citizens. Human rights education also creates opportunities for the internalization of these rights into values and personal ethics. As the worth of each individual is celebrated, each child learns to value his or her talents while respecting the talents of others. As children are appreciated, they learn to appreciate others; as children are loved, they learn to love others; as children are protected, they learn to protect others.

Education has an especially important role in the lives of children coming from war zones, refugee camps or other areas of conflict. These children often have personally experienced the loss of family, home, freedom and security. These are experiences which leave permanent psycho-social scars on children. They also tend to come with little experience in a formal school system. It is important to recognize the unique needs of these children and families and offer patience and support when they arrive in the classroom. Parents of these children have also suffered trauma and are normally dealing with difficult transitions into the workplace and, generally, into Canadian society. Teachers are an invaluable key to the success of these students and special attention needs to be made to develop relationships with the children and parents so they can fully understand how to embrace the educational experience and ultimately, realize their human rights in Canada.



INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, many people abuse and mistreat others not because they lack awareness of human rights, but because of how they see one another. It is the disparity within and between groups that lead to many of the acts of discrimination we see today. The imbalance of power allows one group to dictate societal norms at the other groups' expense. Individuals perceived to be violating a societal norm are seen as outsiders and tend to be marginalized and excluded.

Another reason for the violation of human rights is lack of awareness. Vulnerable groups often do not realize that they are legally entitled to the same treatment as those that marginalize or exclude them. To this end, it is crucial that children are taught human rights explicitly. Teaching human rights, however, is "not merely about valuing and respecting human rights, but about fostering personal action in order to guarantee these conditions" (Tibbitts, 2005). Therefore, in addition to learning about human rights as an issue, it is important for children to experience the feelings of respect, responsibility and empowerment that come from internalizing the principles on which human rights are based.

Transformative learning, which is learning through action and experience, provide the conditions for this personal empowerment. Essentially, transformative learning is a multi-faceted process that encourages students to grow into active learners and self-motivated participants in their communities.

The following list is a summary of practices that foster transformative learning in students:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Learning Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safe • open • promotes trust • supports self-disclosure |
| Teacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trusting • empathetic • caring |
| Teaching Methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner-centred • cooperative • promote autonomy, participation and col laboration • relate new learning to familiar situations and previous knowledge |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present materials as problems to solve rather than facts to memorize • share and build upon ideas • explore alternative viewpoints and diverse perspectives • discuss emotions and feelings • practice problem-solving and critical reflection |
| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feedback needs to assist the process of transformative learning • opportunities for self-dialogue |

- summarized from Tibbitts, 2005

In classrooms where the conditions of transformative learning are met, the focus of human rights learning shifts from a set of rules to a framework for caring, compassion and action whereby students have the desire to improve the human condition and inspire change in others.

CREATING A CARING AND RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT

Creating a caring and respectful classroom is an important part of a child's learning experience and will teach children how to be compassionate and understanding. The experience of having his or her opinions and beliefs respected will encourage children to act responsibly and respect the opinions and beliefs of others. Promoting a sense of belonging and acceptance in students allows them to confidently engage in learning and active citizenship. Active learning and citizenship in the classroom can then translate into action at the community level. Through these experiences, children will see the direct application of human rights to their own lives as well as the lives of others. It is this transformative learning that encourages students to be active global citizens.

In creating a caring and respectful classroom, it is important that children:

- Experience respect;
- Experience age-appropriate responsibility;

- Witness and experience the appreciation of diversity;
- Feel valued;
- Feel free to express themselves; and,
- Participate actively.

ESTABLISHING EQUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers are in a position to facilitate a shared sense of power between different groups of students. Tendencies towards discrimination can be greatly reduced when students encounter one another in equal status interactions. There are several practices that teachers can use to promote equality within the classroom:

- Promote a sense of belonging within the class early on in the school year. Ensure that vulnerable students have opportunities to form relationships with students that hold power within the class social hierarchy.
- Give everyone an equal chance to provide answers.
- Moderate opinion sharing and discussions of personal experiences to ensure all students have the opportunity to share and learn from one another.
- Create an inclusive classroom and emphasize the value of diversity within the school and local community.
- Help students experience social cohesion—the unity and productivity that comes from people working toward a common goal with respect, sympathy and kindness.
- Present human rights as the sharing of privileges and opportunities that each one of us benefits from.

CONFRONTING DISCRIMINATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Discriminatory behaviours in the classroom need to be dealt with quickly and firmly. Especially in lower grades, students do not have a clear understanding of discrimination and may not realize that their behaviors are harmful. When racial slurs are overlooked, students learn that this language is acceptable. When the use of stereotypes is tolerated, children learn to judge people based on these false attributes rather

than giving people the opportunity to show who they really are. By correcting all potentially discriminatory remarks and behaviours, adults send the message that these actions can hurt others and therefore will not be tolerated.

In the event of a discriminatory remark or behaviour, adults can follow these steps:

- Bring everyone involved together, but also speak to each child separately, to determine what happened.
- Clearly condemn the behavior, not the offending child.
"Calling someone x is not acceptable"
- Offer support to the insulted child without criticizing or belittling any anger, fear or other emotions they may be feeling.
"It is okay to be angry/sad/disappointed/scared when someone (calls you a name)"
- Deliver a consequence as with any other inappropriate behavior. Consequences should be clear and consistent.
- Discuss the incident with the parents. Explain that you want to encourage respect for diversity in the classroom and students need to understand that discriminatory behaviours are not acceptable.

STARTING POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

WHAT DO HUMAN RIGHTS MEAN TO YOU?

When introducing the concept of human rights in the classroom, it may be useful to determine the students' understanding of the subject. Present the question what do human rights mean to you to the class using one or two of the following methods. The resulting discussion will help teachers decide which activities to use, how much background work is necessary and how closely aligned students beliefs are.

Engage in a simple class discussion. Ensure everyone has a chance to share his or her opinion.

As a class, brainstorm the basic elements people need to live their life (shelter, food, water, safety, education, health, freedom, equality, justice, etc). What negative conditions might lead to the deterioration or absence of these elements? Examples may include poverty, region one is born in, discrimination, control, deprivation, or inequality.

Ask each student to answer the question what do human rights mean to you in one line on a strip of paper. Take turns reading out loud and adding to the board or on a "human rights tree". Teachers can be creative here and have students cut out the paper in the shape of a dove or another symbol.

Turn this question into a language arts assignment that is handed in for marking. Teachers can ask that students include all elements of a paragraph, essay or letter to an official or the leader of a nation. This activity would be especially helpful if teachers foresee conflicting beliefs and attitudes arising among the class in an open discussion. While there is no need to discourage open dialogue or opposing views, it may be valuable to be aware of contradictory attitudes in advance of further discussion in the classroom.

Ask students to pick out one book from the library that represents a human right. Provide sample stories or ideas so students understand that they are not to find a book about human rights, but rather they are to find human rights in a story. Students can then write a paragraph to explain how the story represents a human right. This can also be expanded into student presentations to further the concept of idea sharing, open dialogue and acceptance.

RELATED QUESTIONS

- *Who are human rights for?*
- *What does it mean to "violate" human rights?*
- *Who is affected when human rights are violated?*
- *How can we ensure that human rights are not violated?*

PEOPLE AROUND ME

In a talking circle, ask students what respect means to them and how people show respect to one another. Next, ask students to name one good quality they admire in people and one good quality that they themselves possess. Discuss the following:

- *Do you respect in others the quality you like about yourself?*
- *Do you respect good qualities in others that you do not have yourself?*
- *Do all human beings deserve respect? Why or why not?*

Next ask the class to think of a time when they felt hurt because someone did not respect them.

- *How did it feel to be disrespected?*
- *Why do people sometimes act disrespectfully toward others?*
- *What can you do when others do not respect you?*

To conclude the activity, have each student write one thing they will do to show respect to someone. Ask them to read it out loud and put it up on the wall/bulletin board. Revisit this list later in the week to see how many followed through with their act. Ask how it felt to show respect and how it made the recipient feel to be respected.

– adapted from *ABC: Teaching Human Rights, United Nations, 2003*

CLASSROOM RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Establishing classroom rights and responsibilities at the beginning of the school year can set the stage for a positive working environment year-round. Allowing the class to help decide upon these “classroom rules” encourages students to think about how their actions and behaviours affect others. It also encourages children to think about the teacher’s role and their own role in maintaining the classroom environment.

When creating classroom rules, ask students “what they want” for the classroom environment. Students can do this in small groups, as individual assignments or as a brainstorming session with the whole class. Once lists have been compiled, ask the class to choose just the

items they think are really needed. Add these items to a chart entitled "Our Classroom Needs". Finally, ask the class to choose which of these "needs" they think are "rights". List these on a chart labeled "Our Classroom Rights".

Ask students why they have chosen these items and then emphasize the essential connection between rights and responsibilities. Ask students to rephrase each right in terms of responsibilities and list these in a separate chart labeled "Our Classroom Responsibilities" (e.g. "Everyone should feel safe in this room" might be revised as "Everyone has the responsibility not to insult anybody or hurt anyone's feelings").

Once the class has agreed on its lists of basic rights and responsibilities, display them so that they can be referred to or amended as necessary. Sometimes children or the teacher may break the rules or situations may arise that the rules do not address. Sometimes conflicts may arise when classroom rules are not compatible with the rules of other teachers or the school administration. These situations call for discussion and careful consideration of why things are going wrong. Order achieved by general consensus rather than simple control is always harder to get and the process of reaching this consensus calls for compromise and careful negotiation. Such a process is itself however a valuable learning experience.

- adapted from *ABC: Teaching Human Rights*, United Nations, 2003



GENDER EQUALITY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Because of the great strides in addressing gender equity within Canada, current issues and imbalances are subtle and discreet. It is the gap between opportunities for men and women in cultures rooted in traditional beliefs that is much more evident. Women from regions around the world generally do not have access to their rights or benefit in society in ways that men do. While men have complete freedom to go where they like and associate with whomever they choose, in many cultures women are restricted in what they do, where they go and with whom they speak. In some communities, these constraints apply to all aspects of a woman's life. For example, in many rural parts of Asia, women may not travel anywhere without a male escort and they may not initiate activities (buy or sell items at the market, vaccinate offspring, answer questions about their family) without their husband's permission.

In addition to this submission and obedience, the pervasive lack of respect toward women manifests itself in humiliating treatment in public as well. In some countries, sexual teasing—sometimes referred to as “Eve teasing”—has become such a problem that special trains and female-only areas are becoming increasingly common.

The trafficking of women for sex and sex tourism is another growing human rights issue. Trafficking reports have come from nearly every world region, with the greatest number of victims coming from Asia, the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe (UNFPA, 2006).

Derogatory proverbs help to perpetuate the devaluation of women in these regions. Cultural sayings asserting that women are intellectually inferior or need to be beaten are used as excuses for unfair treatment against women. Casual joking about female inferiority gives males permission to abuse and mistreat women.

Domestic violence against women is a problem all around the world. According to the United Nations Population Fund, in every country where a reliable, large-scale study has been conducted, between 10 and 69 per cent of women reported to have been physically abused by an intimate partner (UNFPA, 2006). In some countries, it is also common for women to be physically abused by their brothers and fathers

for actions that are perceived as shaming for the family. Because the devaluation of women is common place, these abuses are largely tolerated by many cultures and perpetuated by governments. Media reports and human rights organizations maintain that the legal system continues to operate in ways that make women feel responsible for the violence.

The majority of women in these countries do not question male superiority and accept the inequality between genders as normal. In fact, many women from traditional societies have internalized these values and behave in ways that support the chronic discrimination against females. The violence and lack of respect for women as human beings further perpetuates the continual treatment of women as persons of low worth.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

When a child sees his or her sister, mother or female relative treated disrespectfully compared to her male counterparts, he or she learns that some people deserve more respect than others. If girls experience inequality at home or in the community, they learn that, as females, they are less important. They learn to be docile and obedient. The inequality some children see at home is likely to manifest itself as similar behavior at school. As a result, certain girls come to school feeling like second-class citizens who must suffer abuse quietly while some boys have been raised to believe they can treat females as lesser beings.

The imbalance of power between males and females in some cultures allows boys to taunt, harass and humiliate girls under the pretense of having fun. This maintains the view of women as an objects or commodities and validates their inferior status.

Boys and girls can often understand the basic ideas behind respect and manners if it is presented as treating others the way they themselves would like to be treated.

- *Do you like to be pinched? Then you should not pinch others.*
- *Do you like to be teased and called names? Then you should not tease others.*
- *Do you like it when people pull down your pants in front of others? Then you should not pull up a girl's skirt.*

Gender equality cannot become a universal reality until we all begin to value females and their contribution to society. Appreciating the importance of each gender will enable males and females to relate to one another more positively.

In a classroom, promoting the idea that everyone is equal begins with valuing each student's contribution specifically. To counter the inequalities students may have internalized subconsciously, it is important for teachers to be especially deliberate in their actions and in the content they choose.

WHAT WE TEACH

Ask yourself...

- *Is the resource up-to-date in terms of beliefs?*
- *Is the resource based on stereotypes or underlying assumptions about gender?*
- *Are both traditional and untraditional roles portrayed?*
- *Are minority groups represented (when appropriate)?*
- *Are both genders portrayed as contributing positively to society?*
- *Does the resource take a positive approach to human similarities and differences?*

Many stories portray males as aggressive, destructive or heroic. Women are often shown as victims needing saving or assistance. Resources may still use he/she in gender stereotypical ways, for example, he for doctor, she for nurse, or use gendered terms such as policeman, fireman and businessman. Often times these resources are still valuable. Teachers need not disregard materials containing gendered language and assumptions. Conversely, these sections can be used for additional learning-teaching moments! Teachers can instruct the class on the point of the lesson while demonstrating the inconsistencies and assumptions that exist in everyday life.

Alberta Education has created an 11-page document to guide the development of all teacher and student resources. Guidelines for Recognizing Diversity and Promoting Respect (Alberta Education, 2008) lists criteria that must be met to ensure each school resource promotes the awareness and understanding of all members of society. These criteria may be helpful when selecting new resources to use for the class. The

document lists examples of how certain resources can help nurture positive self-image in students and how stories may convey human endeavour in different ways. There is also a short section on teaching controversial issues.

HOW WE TEACH

Ask yourself...

- *Do I call upon female and male students equally?*
- *Do I make assumptions about students' interests, behaviours and abilities based on gender?*
- *Do I make assumptions about students' beliefs and experiences based on stereotypes?*
- *Do I punish specific students rather than specific behaviours?*
- *Do I tolerate certain behaviours from some students but not from others?*

A group of education students from a near-by university were touring an elementary school. A staff member overheard two elementary students watching the group. "What do you think they are doing here?" one student asked. The second student replied, "The girls are learning to be teachers and the boys are learning to be principals".

ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING IDEAS

WHO'S WHO

Instruct students to examine books or other materials that include stories. Have them answer the following questions:

- *Are there the same number of references to males and females?*
- *Do the men and women respect each other as equals?*
- *Do the men take an active part in parenting and housekeeping tasks?*
- *Do the women take an active role outside the home and, if so, in jobs other than traditionally female occupations (e.g. teachers, nurses, secretaries) or unpaid or low paid jobs?*
- *Can you find any female characters shown as brave decision-takers, physically capable, adventurous, creative and interested in a wide range of careers?*
- *Can you find any male characters shown as humane, caring people who express their emotions?*
- *Which stories do you like the most? Why?*

This activity may be adapted for math. Use the information collected in this activity to teach students about fractions, ratios or graphing.

– adapted from **ABC: Teaching Human Rights, United Nations, 2003**

GENDER BENDER

Take a familiar story (folk or fairy tale, popular children’s novel, film, etc) and retell it with the gender of the characters switched. Discuss the effects of this gender switch. Ask students to do their own story rewrite with a different familiar story. Discuss the challenges involved. In pairs, have students read each other’s stories and provide feedback. Was the new story believable? What feelings did you experience listening to the new story? Was it as appealing as the original version?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

UNITED NATIONS CYBERSCHOOL BUS

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/mdgs

The CyberSchoolBus is the United Nations’ global teaching and learning project. The website contains information on current issues, resources for K-12 and relevant games for youth. The United Nations has identified eight Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by the year 2015. Promoting gender equality and empowering women is one of these goals.

THE MEDIA AWARENESS NETWORK

www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers

The Media Awareness Network website contains Canadian media and Internet education resources for teachers and parents. A number of lesson plans relate to gender portrayal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Our identities are shaped by a multitude of factors—culture, religion, language, gender, environment, sexual orientation, ability, etc. Plurality refers to the diversity of cultures, religions and ethnicities that make up our nation as well as the diversity within each culture, religion and ethnicity. Equality is the notion that each characteristic and each individual difference has its own merit and value and should be treated as such. Inclusiveness refers to each person's place within society with his or her own unique identity.

Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees that "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination". Despite this promise, for some segments of the population, society seems to function in ways that promote uniformity rather than plurality, inequality instead of equality, and exclusion rather than inclusion.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC PLURALITY

One in five Canadians are foreign born. Sixteen per cent of Canada's population belongs to non-Aboriginal visible minorities. Between 2001 and 2006, Canada's visible minority population increased by 27 per cent. This was five times faster than the five per cent growth rate of the total population.

Nearly 60 per cent of all new immigrants to Canada come from Asia. Most live in the large metropolitan cores—Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Calgary and Edmonton (Statistics Canada, 2006). Over 300,000 people living in Canada report being of African descent. This population grew by 32 per cent between 1996 and 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2007a). Another 250,000 people with Latin American roots live in Canada. This community also rose by 32 per cent between 1996 and 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2007b).

Unfortunately, many of these minority groups still experience discrimination at school, in the workplace and in their communities. Research has shown that, in Canada, immigrants encounter more barriers in the workplace than people from the majority group. Despite efforts by the provincial and federal governments to promote the hiring of minorities in the public service and other industries, the selection

process remains culturally biased, foreign credentials are understated, and often too much emphasis is placed upon subjective assessments that place visible minorities at a distinct disadvantage.

RELIGIOUS PLURALITY

Despite the fact that most of the major world religions are represented in Canada, many Canadians still experience disrespect and poor treatment because of what they do or do not believe. Much of the religious intolerance and discrimination in Canada stems from lack of knowledge. There is a tendency to associate people with darker skin or Arabic sounding names or people from Arabic nations as anti-Western Islamic extremists. In fact, 22 countries from across Asia and Africa make up the Arab world. The term "Arab" actually refers to people who speak Arabic and share a common Arabic heritage. It does not refer to a race of people or to their religion. There are many races, cultures and religions practiced within each Arabic country. About three quarters of the Arab world is Muslim, the other 25 percent practice forms of Christianity and other world religions. Also, Arabs make up only about 20 per cent of the Muslim world. That is, most of the Muslims in the world are from non-Arab countries.

DISABILITIES

Almost 10 per cent of the world's total population—over 500 million people—have some type of physical, intellectual, sensory or mental disability. The discrimination that people with disabilities face is two-fold. First is the discrimination they experience from people who have prejudicial ideas about disabilities. Second, essential services in the community that the general population take for granted are often inaccessible for people with disabilities.

Negative attitudes toward people with disabilities still exist in many societies. In some countries, people with disabilities are segregated from the community and are pitied or considered inferior. Some may receive basic education from a special school but others do not attend school at all. Integrating children and adults with disabilities into mainstream society is a new practice in many cultures.

The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 23, recognizes the rights of children with disabilities to "enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance

and facilitate the child's active participation in the community". The Convention calls for care-givers to extend special care to such children to ensure that they have effective access to services and receive training, education, and preparation for employment, among other services, in a "manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development".

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Students who experience discrimination at school often feel alienated and may develop low self-esteem as a result. Many limit their social interactions, feeling like they do not fit in, and may even be afraid to go to school. The fear of being targeted may interfere with learning. Children may avoid activities and have trouble focusing on academics which may lead to underachievement in school. Eventually this may translate into settling for a less challenging or less satisfying occupation than they are capable of. Ultimately, discrimination affects relationships and self-esteem as well as school and life achievement.

While children in Canada still experience discrimination in school and on the playground, these incidents are often difficult to identify. Teachers do not usually witness racism or bullying and even the overt instances are often overlooked. Especially since the onset of the Internet, harassing fellow classmates can be extremely subtle and seemingly invisible. In younger grades, students may not even be aware that his or her behavior is discriminatory or that he or she is being discriminated against.

Children with disabilities are among the most vulnerable minority groups. They are often victims of abuse, neglect, bullying and social exclusion. Even simple rejection and exclusion leads to a deep awareness of being different from peers and siblings. This alone can have a major impact on the emotional development of a child. Because families of people with disabilities may be more concerned with overcoming the obvious, immediate obstacles, the emotional needs and mental health of disabled children may at times be overlooked.

In the classroom, teachers can discourage racism, bullying and other acts of discrimination by purposefully promoting diversity and celebrating individuality. When teachers acknowledge that students are multi-faceted individuals whose identities are shaped by race, ethnicity, gender, religion and ability, they promote appreciation for difference

and show their students the value of understanding and empathy. By expecting and reciprocating compassion and respectful behaviour, teachers demonstrate the necessary connection between rights and responsibility.

ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING IDEAS

STARTING POINTS

When introducing students to the concepts of race and ethnicity for the first time, educators recommend following a logical sequence of learning activities.

- Begin with low-risk activities. Learners need to feel safe in order to examine and express deep feelings.
- Begin with activities requiring only individual reflection, then move to discussion in pairs and small groups before engaging in whole group discussions.
- Move from concrete to abstract. Students must first see examples of race rooted in concrete experience.
- Move from personal to institutional/societal. Before examining how race affects society, students need to explore the impact of race on a personal level.
- Move from difference to dominance. Allow students to talk about their own experiences as members of a racial or ethnic group and listen to others talk about their experiences to explore the difference between groups. Following this, students can be better prepared to consider concepts of societal dominance, social power and privilege.

- adapted from Bell, Adams and Griffin, 2007

IN THE SAME BOAT

Ask students what types of similarities they have with the other students in the class. Explain that there are probably many more similarities that they are not aware of. Start the activity by naming a category (number of siblings, kind of pet, favourite activity, birth month, career aspirations, types of sports played, favourite holiday, etc) and ask students to form

a group with others who share that category. Give students a chance to discuss each similarity in their groups. Do this a number of times to ensure that students have an opportunity to be grouped with a number of different classmates. Conclude by asking students what they learned from the activity. Discuss people's unrecognizable similarities and differences. Help students understand that many similarities exist among "different" children, i.e. a boy and a girl may both like to swim, play soccer and hope to become a police officer; a disabled student may have a dog and love to read science fiction just like many other students in the class; a student of African descent and a student of European descent may both attend the same church and have the same family traditions.

- adapted from **ABC: Teaching Human Rights, United Nations, 2003**

PREFERRED FUTURES

Students work in small groups to create the front page of a newspaper dated January 1, 2040 (or other future date). Explain that it should show how they hope their town, nation or the world will look on that day. Students then work backwards from that date at ten-year intervals preparing front pages that show how the world achieved this future.

- adapted from **Building Peace from the Inside Out, Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, 2006**

RESPONDING TO RACIST REMARKS

Speaking out against acts of discrimination can be difficult. Using skits can help students practice responding to racist remarks and other inappropriate comments. Working in groups of three or four, have students write a brief skit about an act of racism they have witnessed or experienced. The skit could show someone making a stereotypical remark, putting someone down or telling an inappropriate joke. Instruct students to show a positive way to respond to the situation. Provide an example of an appropriate response to the class, i.e. "That's just a stereotype" or "Do you know any other jokes that don't put people down?"

Ask each group to perform their skit for the class. Take suggestions from the audience about other ways to respond to discrimination.

– adapted from www.cyberschoolbus.un.org

CELEBRATING MARCH 21ST

March 21 is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Organize an event in the class or for the entire school to create awareness of the challenges posed by discrimination. Have students create their own means of expressing commitment to end racial discrimination by making posters, writing poetry, letters or essays, performing skits or other dramatic presentations or reader's theatre. Watch a video, invite a speaker, bake hand-shaped cookies or order the *Stop Racism* sign.

– See the Canadian Heritage website at www.pch.gc.ca/march-21-mars and the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations at www.naarr.org

INVITING GUEST SPEAKERS

Invite individuals with particular disabilities to speak to the class. Ask them to talk not just about the challenges associated with their disability, but also about the positive aspect of their disability and their lives in general. Speakers from various ethnic or religious backgrounds can also be invited to speak in class about the positive aspects of their ethnicity or religion and the challenges of living in this society.

TEACHING ABOUT DISABILITIES THROUGH STORIES

AUTISM

Many children with autism take part in mainstream education and activities. These environments may initially be overwhelming for some children with autism. However, with support and understanding, these children can participate fully in society and have meaningful relationships with their peers. The children's story *Since We're Friends: An Autism Picture Book* (Shally and Harrington, 2007) is written from

the perspective of a school-aged boy whose friend happens to be autistic. The story cleverly describes various situations that are commonly challenging for children with autism, suggesting ways in which friends can ease anxiety and offer support.

DOWN'S SYNDROME

The story *Be Good to Eddie Lee* (Fleming, 1997) addresses each child's right to be treated with dignity and to be given the means to realize his or her fullest potential. This is the story of a gentle boy with Down's syndrome and the discrimination he encounters from local children, and sometimes members of his own family. It is a powerful lesson in acceptance and understanding. Passages could be turned into role-plays in the classroom. Students can work together in groups to rewrite passages to make comments supportive and respectful instead of hurtful and discriminatory.

– adapted from DeGeorge, 1998

EPILEPSY

In the book *Becky the Brave: A Story About Epilepsy* (Lears, 2002), a young girl explains epilepsy to a class full of students after her sister has an epileptic seizure. This story is a good introduction to the behaviours associated with epilepsy. It would also work well as a starting point for discussions about individuality, diversity, courage and supporting others. This story illustrates the importance of providing information and sharing feelings as a way to gain understanding and empathy.

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Arnie and the New Kid (Carlson, 1990) is the story of a cat named Arnie who teases the new student in the wheelchair. After he has an accident, he befriends the new student and realizes that they have many things in common. Lower elementary grades will enjoy this simple picture book. Teachers can use this story to discuss bullying, the effects of teasing as well as feelings in general. Teachers of upper elementary grades can ask students (individually or in pairs) to write and illustrate their own stories to teach younger students about disabilities.

VARIOUS DISABILITIES

The book *We Can Do It!* (Dwight, 1992) chronicles the daily lives of five children with different disabilities. Color photographs show children with cerebral palsy, blindness, spina bifida and Down's syndrome engaging in various activities with family and friends. Students can be asked to identify how each child uses his or her abilities to overcome their disability.

LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY EFFORTS

Many people in our society are working to improve relations between different groups in order to create a more inclusive society. To this end, non-profit organizations organize cultural exchanges, education programs, discussion groups and other activities around the city and in the community. Have students use the library, Internet or other community resources to find community groups that are working on related issues. Ask a representative to come to the classroom to talk to the students about his or her organization.

Alternatively, ask students to find out more about different organizations through a phone or face-to-face interview or by exploring websites. Students can then share what they learned about their organization to the rest of the class. Once information from all the different organizations has been shared, the class can choose one organization to help.

Suggested questions for students to ask/answer:

- *What are the goals of the organization?*
- *What activities does the organization carry out to reach these goals?*
- *Who is involved in the work?*
- *What kind of impact has the group had? Who has been helped?*
- *What can children do to help?*

- Adapted from the United Nations cyberschoolbus website:
www.cyberschoolbus.un.org

Non-profit organizations can also connect schools to diverse cultural and ethnic communities. Members of different communities can share their experiences with the class. Personal stories can illustrate the connection between human struggle and the role of human rights and help students see diversity as reality.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CANADIAN RACE RELATIONS FOUNDATION

www.crr.ca/divers-files/en/pub/faSh/ePubFaShRacScho.pdf

A 12-page resource entitled *Racism in our Schools* provides teachers and school administrators with practical information to help prevent racism in their school.

DIVERSITY TOOLKIT

www.ucalgary.ca/~dToolkit/albertawebbasedresources.htm

The Diversity Toolkit project at the University of Calgary aims to promote acceptance of newcomers from different cultural backgrounds.

I BELIEVE IN RESPECT WEBSITE

www.ibelievein.ca

This site has been developed to create awareness about the benefits of religious diversity. The website lists resources for teachers and students, including a video encouraging students to be open to diversity.

JOHN HUMPHREY CENTRE FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

www.jhcentre.org

The John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights is a non-profit organization in Edmonton, Alberta dedicated to Human Rights Education. The Centre has a number of ongoing projects and has created several educational resources to help teach human rights. One such resource, *The Rights in the Sun Curriculum*, is a book of interactive human rights games and activities for ages 5-25.

KIDS AROUND THE WORLD

www.katw.org

This website aims to introduce North American children to the lives of children from developing countries around the world. KATW promotes awareness and cultural understanding through video clips, audio clips, images, interviews, background information and lesson plans.

NORTHERN ALBERTA ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS

www.naarr.org

The Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR) is dedicated to fostering racial harmony and social justice through education, intervention and community support. Resources include the anti-racism resources *Cultural Crossroads Catalogues*, for all grade levels. In addition, the website provides information on its Aboriginal outreach program as well as ideas and background information for respectfully engaging Aboriginal students.

SOCIETY FOR SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

www.sacsc.ca/resources

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities develops programs and resources to help promote respect and prevent bullying in schools and communities. SACSC has written a series of information booklets to assist teachers in creating an equitable and caring environment for all children in their classrooms. The booklets in this series focus on Aboriginal students, Arab and Muslim students, newcomer students, students of all faiths and students of all races.

TEACHER VISION

www.teachervision.fen.com/learning-disabilities/reading/5316.html

A teacher's website full of resources. Includes an extensive list of fiction and non-fiction books about a variety of disabilities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

While there seems to be a global shift toward the acceptance and appreciation of cultural, racial and religious difference, acceptance of different sexual orientation has been slow. Sexual minorities are among the most marginalized people around the world.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual and queer (LGBTQQ) persons are often denied basic civil, political, social and economic rights. Often misunderstood, LGBTQQ persons are not trying to gain any special or additional rights but simply the observance of the same rights as those of heterosexual persons.

Many organizations have been created to address the diverse realities of students. For over a decade, schools in urban centres across Canada have been forming gay-straight alliances to educate staff and students about the violence, discrimination and bullying that gay students face daily. Unfortunately, school-based initiatives in smaller schools and rural communities have been much slower to develop.

Acceptance of sexual minorities has also been slow within many of the immigrant communities in Canada. Cultures rooted in ancient traditions and conservative thought find it especially difficult to accept and understand. Homosexuality itself is still illegal in many Asian and African countries and much of the conservative older generation in these cultures feel that homosexuality exists only in other cultures, not in their own. While most governments have turned a blind eye to homosexuality and penalties have not been instituted, the atmosphere of secrecy has immobilized the cause of LGBTQQ people, who often keep their relationships a secret their entire lives.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Despite the growing acceptance of sexual minorities in mainstream society, coming out is still a challenge. The possibility of disappointing or angering family members and friends coupled with the need to explain and justify one's life choices makes the process painful and confusing.

Because of the conservative influence on their families, LGBTQQ youth from immigrant families often have a more difficult time coming out compared to non-minority youth. Many fear rejection and do not want to disappoint their parents. The youth may be worried that their parents

will think they are disgracing the family. For young people still living at home, the fear of being thrown out of the house and not having a place to live is an additional possibility. For these reasons, many LGBTQ youth do not come out to their families at all and keep their sexual orientation a secret. Others come out to their friends and social circles but manage to keep this part of their lives a secret from their families.

TEACHING IDEAS

An LGBTQ resource teacher who works with school districts shared an anecdote about how teachers have made changes in their teaching to promote an inclusive school environment:

“We have a teacher who, from a religious perspective, thinks homosexuality is wrong, but in her unit on the definition of ‘family’, she includes same-sex families as an example. She says, ‘If my students can’t see themselves reflected in the curriculum, how are they going to learn?’”

– Teaching Tolerance website www.tolerance.org/index.jsp

When teaching respect for diversity, it is important that sexual orientation not be forgotten, as it is one of the many ways that people are different from one another. Having an inclusive school environment for LGBTQ students does not mean that teachers must forfeit their religious beliefs or promote homosexuality, just as ensuring an inclusive environment for all religions and ethnicities does not require teachers to forfeit their own beliefs to promote Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism or Judaism. Creating an inclusive environment simply requires school staff to show an appreciation for diversity and take a stand against all types of discrimination and bullying. After all, students should be able to attend school without the threat of verbal or physical harassment.

Often times, young people use phrases such as “that’s so gay” or “faggot” in situations where they are not necessarily meant to be derogatory. However, these types of casual comments may be hurtful to students who are questioning their own sexuality and make them feel abnormal or rejected. Allowing this language in the classroom sends the message that certain discriminatory names are acceptable. Regardless of whether there is a specific target to the words or simply expressing

a feeling, it is important for adults to intervene and explain why these phrases are hurtful and disrespectful.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

www.teachers.ab.ca

The Alberta Teachers' Association has a number of resources to help schools build inclusive communities and prevent discrimination. *Gay-Straight Student Alliances in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers* has been written to support Alberta Schools in creating and sustaining gay-straight student alliances. Click on *Diversity, Equity and Human Rights* on the ATA web site and follow the links.

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

www.bullyfreealberta.ca/homophobic_bullying.htm

The Alberta government's website for preventing violence and bullying has added a section on homophobic bullying. This site includes descriptions of homophobic bullying, how it can impact youth and what teens, parents and other adults can do to stop it.

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

www.homophobiaday.org

This Canadian campaign held every May 17th provides the opportunity for people to work together to end homophobia. The website contains background information, research, teaching tools and steps for taking action in schools. Follow the links in *teaching tools* for online booklets to help families deal with a child's coming out process. Booklets are available in English, Chinese, Korean and Japanese. Also under this link is a list of recommended books addressing LGBTIQ issues for all levels.

NO NAME-CALLING WEEK

www.nonamecallingweek.org

Click on the *resources* link for a number of complete lesson plans for elementary and junior high levels. Lesson plans can be used in conjunction with *no name-calling week* or may stand-alone. The lessons teach about the effects of name-calling and other bullying behaviours and provide students with strategies for dealing with bullying.

PARENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS (PFLAG)

www.pflag.org

Contains several informative links to education, programs and advocacy.

SOCIETY FOR SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

www.sacsc.ca

Safe and Caring Schools for Lesbian and Gay Youth – A Teacher’s Guide is one in a series of booklets focusing on a variety of diversity topics by the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities. The series has been designed to help teachers, school administrators and other adults support minority students in schools and communities and promote an inclusive atmosphere. This particular booklet provides facts, strategies and resources to help teachers ensure students feel safe, included and cared for.

YOUTH UNDERSTANDING YOUTH

www.yuyedm.ca

Youth Understanding Youth is a volunteer community organization in Edmonton that provides social and support services for LGBTTQ youth.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As with all human beings, children are entitled to the rights guaranteed by the UDHR. However, because children rely on others for care and protection, they are more vulnerable than adults. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was specifically created to ensure children around the world have access to the basic necessities of life and the opportunity to realize their full potential as human beings.

Canada has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Both the federal and provincial governments are equally responsible for implementing the Convention. All citizens are obligated to protect children from violence and negligence while in the care of “parents, legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child”. The Child Welfare Act states that if a teacher or other adult has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protection from abuse or neglect, **he or she has a legal responsibility to report the matter to the authorities.**

Unfortunately, many children’s rights continue to be violated. Various aspects of children’s identity, especially gender, ethnicity, disability and economic status, make some children more susceptible to abuse within their own community. This is often due to the lack of awareness of children’s rights and the lack of understanding of what constitutes abuse or neglect.

In some cultures, children, especially females, are not seen as individuals with their own rights. For example, it is common in many Asian cultures for the father or another male relative to make all the important decisions for the family. This includes many decisions that affect children’s lives including the schools they attend, the activities they participate in, the friends they keep and often the person they marry. In these cultures, male children carry elevated status within the family and are often given preference in terms of opportunities, attention and privileges.

Physical abuse is also considered acceptable and even necessary in certain cultures. Men may even be expected to give orders to the females and bestow punishment upon them at will. This behaviour is considered a function of the hierarchy within the family. Families may use physical punishment to discourage children from unacceptable

behaviour. These types of cultural traditions, which have been passed down for centuries, are often adopted by families without question. New immigrants to Canada may not realize that punishing children with physical force is considered abuse under Canadian law.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Children of immigrant families who go to school in mainstream Canadian society may find it frustrating when they compare themselves to others and see their friends making decisions that they are unable to make. Especially in late elementary and junior high, minority students begin learning behaviours and developing interests that may not be considered acceptable or gender appropriate in their native culture. This can put a strain on their family lives and their academic and social life and can negatively affect the way they view their own culture.

Parents may use traditionally methods to exert authority over their children. While this power may be considered normal and acceptable in their own ethnic community, other cultures may not feel comfortable with this type of physical punishment. These situations can be especially tense and challenging when punishment becomes abuse. Parents who perceive their authority as being challenged may see any intervention as an imposition of Canadian culture rather than protection of their children from human rights violations.

Children need to understand what their rights are and that laws exist to protect them. However, it is important to present the concept of personal rights with the notion of responsibility. Children need to learn what rights mean for individuals, communities and societies, and that rights only have meaning if they are balanced by responsibilities. These responsibilities include treating others with respect and not fighting, shunning or bullying other children. By having opportunities to participate in the world around them and being able to experience rights, respect and responsibility for themselves, children will feel the intrinsic motivation that comes with being a responsible citizen.

Children coming from conflict areas such as war zones and refugee camps need special attention from teachers and other adults. Children who have lived in the midst of war and terror have seen extreme violence. These children may have personally experienced the loss of family, home, security, education and freedom. Taking the time to

develop caring and respectful relationships with these children will allow teachers to provide meaningful support and pave the way for the child's successful transition into Canadian society.

ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING IDEAS

INTRODUCING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Begin with a brief discussion about human rights in general. Ask students whether there are any rights and responsibilities that apply more specifically to them as children. Introduce the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Explain that it guarantees children the things they need to grow up to be healthy, safe and happy and to become good citizens in their community. Help children understand the relationship between needs and rights.

Questions for discussion:

- *Why do you think the United Nations has adopted a document just for children's human rights? How are children's needs different from those of adults?*
- *Why do children need special protection? Give some examples.*
- *What do children need for their survival, happiness and development?*
- *Why do children need to participate in their communities? Give some examples.*
- *Who is responsible for seeing that children's rights are respected? (parents, teachers, other adults, other children, the government)*

Next, ask children working in small groups to create ten cards that illustrate things that children need to be happy. They can cut pictures from old magazines or draw these things. Help them label the cards. Ask each group to explain its cards and stick them on the wall under the heading **needs**.

Once each group has posted its cards, announce that the new government is only able to provide some of the items on the list. As a class, decide which ten items to eliminate from the list of needs. Remove the cards selected and post them under the heading **wants**. Then announce that still further cuts are required and the group must eliminate another ten items and follow the same procedure.

Final discussion:

- *What items were eliminated first? Why?*
- *What is the difference between wants and needs?*
- *Do wants and needs differ for different people?*
- *What would happen if the class had to go on eliminating needs?*

– adapted from *ABC: Teaching Human Rights*, United Nations, 2003

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS DEPICTED IN ART

The picture book *For Every Child: The rights of the child in words and pictures* (Castle, 2002) addresses fifteen of the rights articulated at the first UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Each right is simply expressed in text and interpreted in a double page illustration by various artists from around the world. The relevant Convention articles appear at the back in their original form so teachers can examine rights in more depth and detail with their students.

The following ideas can be adapted to use this book with different grade levels and in different subjects:

- Take several related rights at a time and compare the various ways these are interpreted verbally and visually.
- Ask students to choose one right that has some significance for them and to explain this significance and why this right is important for children in general. Alternatively, each right can be assigned to a different student. Ask students to explain the significance and importance of their right. A talking circle can be used so each student can share his or her explanation in a supportive and comfortable setting.
- Use various techniques to create a classroom mural depicting students' own interpretations of the rights mentioned. Ask students to explain why they chose the method they did and what their picture means to them.

- Ask older students to summarize each right to its most basic need or do this with younger students as a class activity.

– adapted from the article *Teaching Human Rights in Elementary Classrooms: A Literary Approach*, www.quasar.ualberta.ca/css

USING STORIES TO EXPLAIN CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The following three books can be used to teach children's rights to young readers (suggested grades 2-3):

Marianthe's Story One: Spoken Memories and Marianthe's Story Two: Painted Words by Alikei (1998) are two tales in the same book. The first is the story of Mari starting a new school in North America after her family immigrates. The second is her description of life in the unnamed village where she was born. The book illustrates several children's rights, including the right to education, opportunity and a homeland. Its double format could serve as a model for students to replicate with their own stories and illustrations about family and school experiences, including immigration. The stories are also valuable for teaching about diversity and encouraging empathy in young children.

Galimoto, (Williams, 1990) set in a small village in West Africa, is about a creative and determined boy who wants to make a toy from wires he finds. Several children's rights relate to play and movement, and Kondi's travels through a day collecting scrap materials to construct his galimoto introduce readers to an imaginative and resourceful young boy as well as the sights and sounds of his village on the sea.

The Name Jar (Choi, 2001) is the story of a young Korean immigrant arriving in a new school where she is worried no one will be able to pronounce or remember her name. The story can be used to introduce the right to express particular cultural beliefs and tradition. Students can share their own families' customs with the class. Young students can also be asked to investigate the meanings behind their own given names or nicknames and explain to classmates how they were chosen for them.

– adapted from the article *Teaching Human Rights in Elementary Classrooms: A Literary Approach*, www.quasar.ualberta.ca/css

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

www.cridoc.net/index_en.php

This organization conducts research on issues related to child rights and houses relevant documents on the website. Includes information on children's issues, legal instruments and regions around the world.

CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION NETWORK

www.crin.org/about/index.asp

This network facilitates the work of its two thousand plus member organizations through the exchange of information and the promotion of children's rights. Information on the website is searchable by legal document, countries and children's rights themes.

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plainchild.asp

EXPLORING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: LESSON SEQUENCES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

www.hrea.org

The Human Rights Education Association website contains a link to this free 115 page resource. This online teacher's manual includes nine small projects of four lessons each for grades 1-9. Detailed lesson plans teach about human rights through cooperative learning, skills training and the development of global values. The manual also includes the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as well as *Say it Right! The Unconventional Canadian Youth Edition of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which translates each article of the CRC into plain, child-friendly language. Also included is a timeline of how children's rights were created.

UNICEF VOICES OF YOUTH

www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/takeaction_2692.html

UNICEF's Voices of Youth website provides a forum for children and youth to learn about and take action toward improving the state of children's rights in many parts of the world. This link connects to a series of digital diaries of children around the world speaking about various children's rights.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP COMMISSION

www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca

The Commission promotes equality and prevents discrimination by helping Alberta citizens settle human rights complaints and by organizing public education initiatives. This site includes a link to a plain language version of the Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act.

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

The Government of Alberta has targeted different audiences through a number of websites aimed at preventing violence and bullying.

www.bullyfreealberta.ca provides statistics, PowerPoint presentations and strategies to help parents and other adults identify and stop bullying.

www.b-free.ca has been developed for youth, in cooperation with Alberta youth. This site includes tips, quizzes and inspirational stories to encourage youth to stand up to bullying behaviours.

www.teamheroes.ca includes a series of games to help children identify bullying behaviours and deal with them safely and effectively.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION ASSOCIATES

www.hrea.org

Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) is an international non-governmental organization that supports human rights learning; the training of activists and professionals; the development of educational materials and programming; and community-building through on-line technologies. HREA is dedicated to quality education and training to promote understanding, attitudes and actions to protect human rights, and to foster the development of peaceable, free and just communities.

JOHN HUMPHREY CENTRE FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

www.jhcentre.org

The John Humphrey Center for Peace and Human Rights is a non-profit organization in Edmonton, Alberta dedicated to Human Rights Education. The Centre has a number of ongoing projects and has created several educational resources to help teach human rights. Among the resources developed by the JHC are a bilingual youth guide to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, with an accompanying poster, as well as a book of interactive human rights games and activities entitled *Rights in the Sun*.

THE SOCIETY FOR SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

www.sacsc.ca/resources

The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities develops programs and resources to help promote respect and prevent bullying in schools and communities. Resources for teachers include workshops, lesson plans, information booklets as well as tip sheets listing strategies for dealing with bullying for both victims and bystanders. Both use simple, easy-to-remember acronyms and are appropriate for all grade levels. These can be posted in the classroom to use with all types of bullying.

UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

www.un.org/overview/rights.html

A complete online version of the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

www.unicef.org

The United Nations Children's Fund is the branch of the United Nations working toward improving the life of children around the world. On

this site, there are several resources for teachers including lesson plans, videos, statistics and booklets on children's rights and global issues. Also links to National Committees UNICEF around the world, each with additional resources for teachers, children and youth.

UNITED NATIONS CYBERSCHOOLBUS

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org

The CyberSchoolBus is the global teaching and learning project of the United Nations and is aimed at children and youth. This site includes lesson plans and teaching ideas related to human rights, peace education, discrimination and other issues. This site also links to official versions and plain language versions of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Click on the *Human Rights* link in the Curriculum section, then select the link *Resources and Links*.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

www.unfpa.org

The United Nations Population Fund is the branch of the United Nations devoted to promoting human rights by providing population data and research. Countries around the world use UNFPA data to create programs and policies to reduce poverty and improve lives. This website contains information and research on several human rights issues.

UNESCO ASSOCIATED SCHOOLS PROJECT NETWORK

www.unesco.ca/en/interdisciplinary/aspnet/default.aspx

UNESCO ASPnet projects prepare students for an increasingly diverse, complex and interdependent world. Students and teachers work together to develop innovative projects at the school, community, provincial and global levels. Learning integrates anti-racism, human rights and global citizenship. Interested schools can become involved by developing a committee of interested teachers and students, completing the UNESCO ASPnet application form and sending it in to the Provincial ASPnet coordinator. A booklet with information on becoming an ASPnet school is available for downloading on this site.

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