

**Public Report on the  
Exploring and Facilitating a Process of Intercultural Training  
For ESL Students, Instructors and Employers Project , Phase I  
NORQUEST COLLEGE, LANGUAGE TRAINING AND ADULT LITERACY  
December 2003 -May 2005**

NorQuest College, a publicly funded, board governed college has been engaged in language learning within a multicultural context for over thirty-five years. While NorQuest College is recognized for its contribution to the fields of language training, adult literacy, workforce development, ESL trades and professional development, this intercultural project marks the first research and development project to create, formalize and share a process for intercultural training.

The goal of this project was to research available models and to customize a process for intercultural training that would include a set of exercises and experiences that will have practical applications and be directly relevant and easy to implement in the ESL classroom as training for instructors and for companies that employ immigrant workers.

This project consisted of 3 main activities:

- 1. Customize a process for intercultural competency training including the development of a framework*
- 2. The development of a cultural competency toolkit made up of a collection of “critical incidents” and quotes*
- 3. The development and delivery of a series of cultural competency workshops for three groups:*
  - I. ESL students*
  - II. ESL instructors and volunteers (includes literacy tutors)*
  - III. Workplace:*

**Rationale/Need**

As citizens of a multicultural society, we are continuously required to engage with people with different cultural backgrounds from our own. These differences are not only across ethno-cultural lines but also between the different sub-cultural identities. People living in such a society require communication skills that take into account cultural differences and build intercultural sensitivity. Developing cultural competence is important for both Canadians and newcomers to support the Canadian view of multiculturalism that celebrates diversity and seeks to take advantage of the richness and creativity that is present in multiple perspectives. There is a distinct lack of resources designed specifically for immigrants, ESL instructors, the ESL classroom and employers who interact with immigrant workers.

In the ESL context, instructors act as cultural brokers for students navigating a new sociocultural environment and negotiating a ‘new’ expanded cultural identity. Instructors acting as culture brokers provide guidance as well as knowledge, awareness and skills training to support a positive and effective transition into Canadian society. Students and instructors need to learn cross-cultural skills for both to successfully interact in the classroom.

Presently, if an instructor wishes to teach cultural competency then she or he must research and build his or her own resources, thereby often leaving it lower on the priority list. Some education professionals acknowledged that they lacked the training to identify their own cultural bias in understanding some of the conflicts or situations arising in their classrooms. Instead culture tends to be addressed as a response to issues that come up in class such as a conflict connected to time, behavior, hygiene, communication, or differing values related to expression, modesty and so on. Therefore, from this starting point, NorQuest College sought to create a process that would begin in the classroom.

### **Developing a Process for Intercultural Training**

**Literature Search:** The project proposed that in order to develop a process, it was necessary to first explore what kind of processes or models of intercultural education are currently being used by both similar and dissimilar organizations.

**Liaising with immigrant serving organizations:** Besides searching for models and resources over the Internet, it was necessary to discuss and consider what would be appropriate for the context with an already recognized need. Therefore, meetings with other intercultural educators and education and cultural brokers from agencies such as the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and the Multicultural Health Brokers proved helpful.

During the project, to clarify my thinking and get feedback, Clare Myers, an independent intercultural consultant, gave valuable input and feedback. The model developed in this project is designed to make resources accessible and to provide a framework for the larger goal of cultural competency or intercultural communication training easier for instructors and students understand.

Students, instructors, and culture brokers were interviewed to collect critical incidents that would be widely accessible to the ESL community in Edmonton for information sharing purposes and to develop training materials and tools. These interviews were recorded and some of them were transcribed. Quotes were taken directly from the transcriptions, from the tapes or from quote captured during the interviews. Critical incidents were gathered from interviews with over 100 students and instructors. The cards were also renumbered and put in categories (Critical Incidents: School, Community, Workplace, Acculturation/Culture Shock) (Quotes: Community and Lifestyle, Being a Newcomer) (School: Teaching and Learning, Communication) for easier identification and use. Themes make it easy for instructors to use choose a critical incident or quote to begin a class discussion when issues come up providing teachable culture moments.

The framework evolved while delivering workshops and modules and interacting with colleagues and working directly with immigrant and refugee communities especially through work with the Cultural Competency Group at the Multicultural Health Brokers Coop.

One way in which we organized the framework was to look at **The Process of Cultural Competency** developed by Dr. Josepha Campinha-Bacote in 1994. Her 5-part model, found in the nursing literature, can be transferred to other contexts and is an effective way of organizing the learning process. Her *Culturally Competent Model of Care* includes 5 components beginning with cultural desire as the basis for any of the other parts to develop. The other four components are cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill and cultural encounter.

Cultural encounter supports ongoing learning and a positive way of looking at unsuccessful or unpleasant cross-cultural interactions (what we call “critical incidents”) encouraging an attitude of curiosity. *This model is the organizing framework for the design of the workshops and modules developed for this project.*

Missing Diagram

## Background Knowledge and Methods

**Cultural Categories:** Brislin and Cushner (1996) offer a three-part framework used to organize a series of critical incidents into workable categories. This framework offers another way to examine and explore the complexities involved in intercultural interactions.

- a. *Experiences* people are likely to have that cause intense *feelings* and engage their emotions.
- b. *Knowledge* areas that people learn are right and appropriate as they are socialized within any given culture, yet these areas incorporate many cross-cultural differences that people find difficult to understand.
- c. *Bases for cultural differences*, especially concerning how people think about and process information

**Cultural Orientations** Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) Cultural Orientations are another way to understand the tendencies and patterns seen in cultural groups and the complexity of cross-cultural interactions.

**Cultural Approach to Developing Skills** (2002) An organizing framework to look at individual factors and broader factors for understanding immigrants and refugees (Developed by the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op)

**Culture-general approach** (Etic)/**Culture-specific approach** (Emic): Cultural competence is a developmental process of increasing cognitive complexity developing around the concept of the perception of difference (Bennett and Bennett, 2001). The culture-general approach aims to develop a vocabulary to talk about culture and increased understanding of the complexity. Culture-general learning develops knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness that will support the culturally competent communicator regardless of the culture of the person they are interacting with.

## **Instructional Design / Selecting Level of Competence**

Milton Bennett proposes that intercultural sensitivity is not a natural human state, but that it is a process of personal growth that develops in stages along a continuum from denial to integration.

Intercultural training and intercultural education are effective in providing a support mechanism for helping individuals move along the continuum of intercultural sensitivity.

**The Intercultural Sensitivity Continuum**, Bennett (1993), is a stage-based model includes six stages that are measured on an intercultural sensitivity scale. It offers appropriate learning objectives for cultural competency training as well as a useful way for trainees to understand their own intercultural competence learning.

**The Experiential Learning Cycle:** Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Bennett and Bennett, 2001) can serve as comprehensive framework for instructional design. The experiential learning cycle is used to inform the sequencing of activities within a workshop or module and includes four different learning styles.

## **Project Activities**

Consequently, the process that evolved simultaneously with the model/framework involved

- Design and writing Critical Incidents and Quotes: A toolkit for developing cultural competence
- Piloting cards in three ESL classes at NorQuest Westmount Campus
- Delivery of Cultural Competency Pilot for Hospital Unit Clerk (HUC) students and Dental Business Assistants (DBA) Students and two exchange sessions between HUCs / DBAs and the Adult Literacy students
- Presentation of 2<sup>nd</sup> "draft" of Critical Incident and Quotes Toolkit with new packaging and new activity guide at Mini ATESL Conference in Edmonton.
- Mini Professional Development workshop using the Critical Incident and Quotes Toolkit with NorQuest ESL instructors at Westmount Campus
- Cultural Diversity Workshop for Literacy Tutors in Red Deer

## **Outcomes**

**Resources:** NorQuest created resources and accompanying materials (teacher guides) entitled: Critical Incidents and Quotes: A toolkit for building cultural competence. This is a bank of strategies for dealing with intercultural issues that are specific to the ESL classroom and workplace in order to manage issues and resolve challenges in order to avert potential conflict. These resources are becoming widely accessible to the ESL community in Edmonton for information sharing purposes and to develop training materials and tools. In addition, researched recommendations have been given to the library to expand intercultural resources.

**Cultural Competency Workshops and Modules:** the Multicultural Health Brokers Coop, the University Of Calgary Department Of Social Work and the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations delivered Twenty-Five Cultural Competency workshops to over 500 people through an initiative

1. Bennett, Milton J. *Towards ethnorelativism: a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity*. In *Education for the Intercultural Experience*. Paige, R. M. (ed.) Yarmouth ME: Intercultural Press, 1993.

Name of Workshop	Other Workshops
<b>Respect in the Workplace</b>	ESL Intensive and LINC classes (Informal pilot of Critical Incident and Quote Cards Toolkit) (3 classes)
Working with Children and Families: Enhancing Cultural Awareness	CONC Bridging Course NorQuest College (Cultural Competency for the Workplace)
Working with Children and Families: Enhancing Cultural Awareness	ATESL Conference (Presentation of Critical Incident and Quotes Toolkit)
Working with Children and Families: Enhancing Cultural Awareness	Literacy Tutors (Red Deer) (Cultural Diversity)
Working with Youth: Engaging immigrant youth	Literacy Tutors Professional Development Day at NorQuest
Working with Seniors: Enhancing cultural awareness	Bissell Center Staff Retreat Professional Development (Cultural Diversity)
Skills in Intercultural Communication	Registrars Office NorQuest College (Cultural Competency for Front Line Staff)
Key Communicators Group: Edmonton Public Schools	Mini-ATESL Conference (Presentation of Critical Incident and Quotes Toolkit)
Youth Employment Strategies	

## Modules

In addition to the workshops, two different modules were designed and delivered.

1. Navigating Canadian Culture: Cultural Competency training for Intensive ESL students. (7x2.5 hours) (November 2004 – January 2005)

2. Intercultural Communication Pilot: NorQuest College Business Careers Department: Hospital Unit Clerks Program, Dental Business Assistants Program. (3x4hours) See appendix 4 for Module handbook (April and May 2005)

**Networking and Collaboration** have made contacts and collaborated with 5 agencies and made numerous professional contacts with others working cross-culturally.

- Interest from rural community leaders in accessing intercultural competency training
- Volunteering and Networking in Literacy Day 2005 resulted in a board position as ESL chair to promote involvement of new Canadians with children studying in the K-12 system

## **Continuing Education Courses: Due to commence Fall 2005**

Course 1: Introduction to Intercultural Communication

Course 2: Advanced Intercultural Communication for the Workplace

### **Concluding Comments**

Feedback from participants shows that the interest in cultural competency is growing and being noticed as a necessity for living and working in Canada (Quotes from participants in Cultural Competency Workshops)

“I noticed that intercultural communication influences our lives. People who live in an intercultural environment need to learn how to deal with some problems that are caused by the influences.”

“I was amazed at the diversity that is just across the hall from me.”

“Immigrant students want to know about Canadian culture and Canadians training in business careers need to know about immigrants.”

Phase one of this project has enabled NorQuest College to begin to fill an important need as an institution to not only provide cultural competency training but also to become a model for a culturally competent organization. In phase two the workshops that have been previously developed and piloted will be revised and made available for distribution and train the trainer purposes. We look forward to Phase Two, which will include a focus on crosscultural competency in the workplace in urban and rural settings. This project aimed to deepen our understanding of how cultural competency training can be made relevant to the needs of immigrants living in Edmonton and those working along side immigrants in the classroom and workplace.