



Glossary of Terms Used in Understanding Diversity

Aboriginal/Indigenous

These terms apply to First Nations people ("Indians"), Inuvialuit (Western Arctic), Inuit (Eastern Arctic), and Metis (mixed ancestry).

Culture

The ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge & way of life of a group of people who share historical experiences.

Discrimination

Treating people inequitably based on characteristics such as their ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. There are three types of discrimination—direct (inter-personal), indirect (unintentional) and systemic (through policies or practices).

Diversity

Refers to all of the characteristics that define us as individuals. It can include characteristics of culture like religion, family structure, work ethic, language, etc. as well as other characteristics like age, physical ability, education, economic status, sexual orientation, etc.

Homophobia

The fear, dislike, hatred, aversion, intolerance, and ignorance of homosexuals and homosexuality. These feelings often lead to acts of prejudice, discrimination, harassment & violence.

Multicultural (many cultures) & Multiculturalism

In Canada, the government policy of Multiculturalism includes a statement of commitment to understanding, acceptance, respect and inclusion of all people in society. Multiculturalism encourages the social, economic, and political participation of all Canadians.

Race

Historically, the concept of race was used to classify humans based on physical characteristics, such as skin colour or eye shape. It has also been used to describe a group of persons related by common descent or heredity. Many scientists argue that the concept of 'race' has no biological validity as humans share 99.9% of the same genetic material.

Racism

The belief that one group of people is superior to another. Racism may be present in organizational and institutional systems and programs as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individual people.

Sexism

Discrimination or prejudice especially against women. Sexism may result in differential treatment of individuals, the denial of opportunities and economic and social disadvantages.

Stereotype

A simple statement or image of a group of people that does not account for individual differences.