

HONOURING DIVERSE BELIEFS IN OUR COMMUNITIES:

A CONVERSATIONAL TOOLKIT

This Toolkit supports the growth of welcoming and inclusive communities by providing a resource for individuals, organizations and institutions to explore the significance of diverse belief systems in our society.

The content of this Toolkit outlines a multi-format workshop designed to engage participants in active learning and dialogue. It supports workshop facilitators with a video documentary, a practical framework for dialogue, and list of additional resources to promote further learning.

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OVERVIEW

This *Conversational Toolkit* is a facilitator's guide for delivering a workshop 1-2 hours in length. It contains the following sections:

Introduction	Preparation: (Page 3)	This list of suggestions helps facilitators organize and prepare for the workshop.
	Format Options: (Page 4)	This section outlines suggestions for structuring the flow and content of the workshop.
	Introduction: (Pages 5 - 9)	This outline provides facilitators with concepts and language to assist with the preparation and presentation of this workshop. It builds a conceptual framework that facilitators can draw on to enrich participants' dialogue and learning over the course of the workshop.
Opening Dialogue	Opening Dialogue: (Pages 10 - 14)	<p>These 10-30 minute activities are intended to be done prior to viewing the video. They will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase participants' receptiveness to the topic and to some of the ideas they will encounter over the course of the workshop. • Provide participants with an opportunity to get comfortable talking and sharing with the group. • Sensitize participants to personal perspectives and experiences that may influence their response to the content of this workshop.
Video	Video: (Page 15)	<p>This 20 minute video explores a number of questions and perspectives on diverse belief systems in our community. It is divided into four sections: Introduction and Context, Challenges and Barriers, Hopes and Opportunities, and Call to Action. The video will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expose participants to language, perspectives and ideas they can draw from and reflect on over the course of the workshop. • Expose participants to visual images of different faith traditions. • Share tangible examples of community programs that explore diverse belief systems. • Stimulate questions. • Foster a sense of curiosity about diverse belief systems. <p>The video can be viewed on its own, or used in combination with the resources in the Toolkit.</p>
Closing Dialogue	Closing Dialogue: (Pages 16-23)	<p>These 20-60 minute activities are intended to be done after viewing the video. They will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow participants to hear perspectives of others in the group. • Provide an opportunity for participants to practice responding respectfully to divergent opinions. • Provide participants an opportunity to practice formulating and articulating their thoughts. <p>A <i>Workshop Evaluation</i> form is included at the end of this section.</p>
Resources	Resources: (Pages 24-28)	This resource package is provided to allow for more detailed exploration of the topic. There is also a sample evaluation form that you may use to collect feedback from participants.

PREPARATION

PREPARING FOR THE WORKSHOP

- Read through the full Toolkit and watch the video to become generally familiar with the topic.
- Think about where your organization “is at” in relation to this topic and consider whether or not it is the right time to offer this workshop.
- Anticipate areas that may be of particular interest to your group and anticipate issues that may arise.
- Ensure that the workshop has been approved by the appropriate management or advisory group in your organization.

ORGANIZING FOR THE WORKSHOP

- Consider whether or not you will need additional assistance in running the workshop. If so, identify some people who may be willing and able to help.
- Consider identifying participants ahead of time who may be willing and able to offer particular pieces of insight into the topic (e.g. people from a range of faith traditions who are willing to share, people with additional training or experience in diversity awareness, people who have travelled or have spent time in another culture).
- Prepare AV equipment for watching the video. The DVD is in a standard format that is compatible with all DVD players and computers in North America.
- Decide if you want to go through the dialogue exercises together as a large group or break up into smaller groups.
- Use the “Format Options” section below to plan how you will use the components of the Toolkit based on your context and time available.

PRIOR TO THE WORKSHOP

- If you plan on breaking the large group into smaller groups for the dialogue exercises, plan your space accordingly.
- Print off hardcopies of resources that participants might find helpful.

FORMAT OPTIONS

The following templates outline suggestions for preparing a one hour workshop or a two hour workshop. If desired, a longer workshop can also be developed by adding additional questions and activities to each section.

SHORT FORMAT WORKSHOP (ONE HOUR TOTAL)

Opening Dialogue (10 minutes) Short Self-Reflection	Video (20 minutes)	Closing Dialogue (20 minutes total)			
		Warm-up Select 1 question	Reflection Select 1 question	Application Select 1 question	Integration Select 1 question

LONG FORMAT WORKSHOP (TWO HOURS TOTAL)

Opening Dialogue (30 minutes) Long Self-Reflection OR Group Activity	Video (20 minutes)	Closing Dialogue (60 minutes total)			
		Warm-up Select 2 questions OR Activity	Reflection Select 2 questions OR Activity	Application Select 2 questions	Integration Select 2 questions

INTRODUCTION

This section of the Toolkit provides facilitators with concepts and language to assist with the preparation and presentation of this workshop. It builds a conceptual framework that facilitators can draw on to enrich participants' dialogue and learning over the course of the workshop.

The title of the Toolkit, "Honouring Diverse Beliefs in our Communities," is likely to provoke questions. What is meant by "communities"? What does the term "diverse beliefs" refer to? What does "honouring" mean? How and why might we go about "honouring diverse beliefs in our communities"? The title of this workshop is intentionally broad to allow participants ample room to explore this largely unmapped area of multicultural and diversity education.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "COMMUNITIES?"

The term "community" is used in this toolkit to broadly apply to any group of people that is connected to one another through personal relationships or shared interests. Communities may be geographical in the sense of cities and neighbourhoods. A community may also be a group of

people who share a common purpose or function such as a workplace or classroom. Religious, political or interest-based groups are communities of people who share common interests or beliefs. Using this definition, each of us is part of many overlapping communities.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "DIVERSE BELIEFS?"

The Toolkit uses the term "diverse beliefs" to include the range of ways in which people create for themselves ultimate meaning, values and purpose. A "belief system" could be a specific and defined religious or spiritual tradition. It could also be a personally held philosophy or worldview. The term "belief system" is also inclusive of worldviews such as atheism, humanism, secularism or agnosticism.

Additionally, the claim to have "no belief system" is, in itself, a type of belief system. We can liken this to making the claim of not having an accent. We all have an accent that defines our particular linguistic upbringing, but as our own accent becomes normalized, we become more likely to see an accent as something that other people have.

All people have a belief system. Some are more explicitly understood or expressed than others, but all people have, at some level, a way of understanding reality and their place in it.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “HONOURING?”

When we “honour” something, we seek to create and sustain conditions that allow it to be more fully understood and appreciated. This process of honouring has an inward component and an outward component. The inward component of “honouring” occurs when we seek to align our own thoughts and actions in a way that allows ourselves to better understand and appreciate something. The outward component of “honouring” occurs when we take that which we are honouring and “put it out there” in some way so that others are also better able to understand and appreciate it.

The word “honouring” sets a higher standard than merely “tolerating” or “acknowledging.” A call to “acknowledge diverse beliefs in our communities” wouldn’t really entice us down the road to understanding. Similarly, a call to “tolerate diverse beliefs in our communities” wouldn’t entice us down the road to appreciation.

ASSESSING READINESS FOR THE WORKSHOP

The process of becoming more honouring of diverse beliefs may involve some level of change in your organization or within individuals in your organization. This topic has the potential to be controversial, so it is worth being sensitive to issues that may help to guide your decisions as to whether or not to offer the workshop, and how to best customize it to meet the needs of your particular context.

The reactions to this topic may range from staunch resistance, to ambivalence, to overwhelming approval. We will look first at how to respond to resistance and approval, and then spend more time exploring how to respond to ambivalence.

If you encounter outright resistance to this workshop, it may not be the right time to offer it. If participants come to the workshop without an openness to explore the topic, the resulting dialogue will likely be difficult and unproductive. In this situation, one option might be to simply invite people to view the documentary and reflect on it on their own with no expectation of dialogue. Another option may be to pursue education around “safer” elements of cultural diversity. Consider these options as opportunities to “plant seeds,” with the hopes that there will be greater receptiveness at some point in the future.

It is important to contrast the idea of “honouring” with the idea of “accepting.” A call to “accept diverse beliefs” would not sit well with many people. It is a simple fact that some belief systems are not compatible with one another. Being told that we need to accept or agree with a worldview or religious perspective that differs from our own will only make people guarded and less likely to move forwards towards a place of understanding. It is entirely possible to understand and appreciate something without agreeing with it or accepting it as truth.

On the flip side, if you encounter overwhelming approval, your group may be ready to simply “jump ahead” to explore more “hands-on” learning opportunities in the community. You may wish to review some of the suggestions and resources listed in the Toolkit and move forward to something that more specifically fits your context.

While resistance or approval may suggest a different approach to this topic, ambivalence is a sign that you are on the right track with presenting this workshop. Ambivalence is the state of feeling two ways about something. It is sometimes described as having “mixed feelings.” If people express ambivalence towards this topic, it suggests that there are some good opportunities for dialogue, learning and change, and that it is a good time to offer this workshop.

We can listen for ambivalence by listening for “yes, but...” statements: “Yes, I agree that this is an important topic, but I have some concerns.” There are many good reasons for exploring how to begin honouring diverse beliefs in our communities. There are also many good reasons for being cautious about how to proceed. We can tap into this ambivalence by asking the questions that you will hear in the documentary: What are the risks involved? What do we stand to gain?

WHAT ARE THE RISKS INVOLVED?

We frequently encounter a level of uneasiness when we begin to talk about honouring the expression of diverse beliefs in our public spaces, organizations and institutions.

Some responses may reflect a fear that talking about religion and spirituality may offend someone or lead to conflict. Other responses may reflect the popular adage that “we should not discuss sex, politics or religion in polite company.” Yet another set of responses may bring into play the idea of “separation of church and state” and reflect a belief that secularism excludes “all things religious” from the public sphere.

While these are not the only types of responses you may encounter, they do represent the range of personal, social and societal beliefs that may shape the conversation in your local context.

WHAT DO WE STAND TO GAIN?

On the other hand, there is a place for a person’s religious and spiritual identity in the public sphere of Canadian society. Religious freedom is enshrined in our Constitution, as well as in a number of international agreements to which Canada is a signatory. To the extent that it does not infringe on the rights of others, Canadian citizens have the right to publicly affiliate with their chosen belief system.

Canadian citizens also have the right to have their religious or spiritual identity recognized as a valid part of their identity as a “whole person.” In Canadian society, when we welcome others, especially diverse others, in to our public spaces, we are not permitted to explicitly or implicitly suggest that they extract one particular aspect of their identity and “leave it at the door.”

A truly inclusive and pluralist society supports the authentic expression of identity at the level of the individual, and creates space for that expression to occur at the level of society. It is in this way that a society becomes truly welcoming and inclusive and moves towards genuine pluralism.

LISTENING FOR AMBIVALENCE

The sections above outline the general framework within which ambivalence towards this topic is typically expressed. Practically speaking, you will hear it expressed in terms more relevant to your particular context:

- A healthcare worker may feel a need to better understand a patient’s religious perspectives in order to provide culturally sensitive care, but may be fearful that asking questions may offend the patient.
- An educator may want students to better understand diverse religious traditions, but may fear that including religion in the curriculum may be perceived in the wrong way.
- A settlement worker may see the need to introduce newcomers to Canadian norms around freedom of religion and religious expression, but may fear that the topic is “off limits.”

You will hear ambivalence towards this topic expressed in a range of ways. When you hear it, understand it as an opportunity for expanded dialogue and learning. Validate it and incorporate it into your planning of the workshop.

STARTING POINTS

Multiculturalism and *secularism* are two concepts that can serve as starting points as we begin to explore what it means to honour diverse beliefs in our communities. *Multiculturalism* and *secularism* mean different things to different people. Reflecting on what the concepts mean to you will prepare you for discussions that may come up during this workshop.

MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is the framework we use to merge diverse cultures within Canadian society. Despite the fact that the concept forms a significant aspect of our Canadian identity, the word means different things to different people.

Some may feel that our Canadian claim to multiculturalism means no more than the fact that we allow people from different cultures to enter and live in our country. This definition views multiculturalism as merely “co-existence.” Taking this a step further, others feel that being multicultural means that diverse cultures go beyond merely co-existing, to an arrangement where diverse cultures are encouraged to share with and contribute to society as a whole. *Integration* is a term sometimes used to describe this vision of multiculturalism. Both of these definitions describe ways that diverse cultures can *fit in*. The next description centers on how the *receiving community* can *fit them*.

This last definition views multiculturalism not just as something that happens *out there*, but as something that happens *in here* as well. According to this definition, multiculturalism is a two way street. Not only do newcomers adapt to new norms and expectations, but individuals in the receiving community adapt as well. The change may be as basic as acquiring a taste for a new type of food, to deeper change in which we re-examine and modify our basic assumptions and perspectives. The word *transformative* is sometimes used to describe this last vision of multiculturalism.

SECULARISM

Secularism is another word that means different things to different people. In general, it is tied to the idea of the “separation of church and state.” On closer examination, however, we sometimes uncover differences in the way that people understand the nature of this “separation.”

For some, secularism is the idea that religious identity and religious considerations should be actively excluded from the public sphere. This understanding views religion and the expression thereof to be entirely a private matter with no place in the public realm. This interpretation is sometimes called “closed secularism.”

Another interpretation of secularism begins with the notion that the state itself should not take on or promote a particular religious identity, but it goes one step further. In “open secularism” the state is non-religious, but not anti-religious. In an open secular state, the state remains religiously-neutral while at the same time supporting conditions that allow for the fair and balanced expression of its citizens’ religious identity in the public sphere.

The concepts of secularism and multiculturalism, as they apply to Canadian society, can serve as touchstones to give us courage to move forwards into that ambivalence between the hopes and fears we have around honouring diverse beliefs in our communities.

GUIDING THE PROCESS

The scope of this workshop, “honouring diverse beliefs in our communities,” is intentionally broad in order to allow ample room for individuals and organizations to explore the topic in a way that is relevant and effective for them. As such, we have offered a range of ways in which facilitators may choose to deliver this workshop, depending on their particular context.

Nevertheless, it is helpful for workshop facilitators to be acquainted with some of the “pieces” that may need to come together in order to move towards a practical application of what it looks like to honour diverse beliefs in their context.

What follows is a list of some of these pieces. This list is not intended to function as a “checklist” to be covered in a systematic way. Instead, these pieces are listed to provide facilitators with an internal framework for focusing and guiding dialogue. Having an understanding of these pieces will allow facilitators to shape the dialogue in a way that allows participants to develop and articulate the ideas on their own. This approach creates more enriched learning opportunities for participants and a greater likelihood of the ideas being applied in a practical way.

1. Anticipate the possibility that a person’s belief system may be a factor in your personal and professional interactions with them.

By anticipating the possibility that a person’s belief system may play a role in our interactions with them, we are better able to listen and respond appropriately. How might the significance of a person’s belief system surface in your context?

2. Develop a self-awareness of the history and perspectives of your own belief system.

Our own belief systems form a “lens” through which we understand and relate to others. It is critical that we have an understanding of how our own perspectives may shape our biases and assumptions about others. In your workshop, how might you emphasize the importance of this process of self-reflection?

3. Become generally aware and informed about the belief systems found in your community.

A basic level of knowledge about the different belief systems in your community is a necessary starting point for moving towards understanding and appreciation. This level of knowledge provides people with some “conversation starters.” What is the level of religious literacy among participants in your workshop?

4. Allow individuals to be your teachers about the specifics of their belief system.

Individual differences are often more important than general categories. Being aware of the need to pay attention to individual differences protects us from making assumptions about a person based on stereotypes. How might opportunities for making these personal connections arise for participants in your workshop?

5. Build connections in your community that can support your learning.

The best way to further your learning in this area is to connect with local resources. What resources are available in your community?

6. Improve your ability to ask questions in an open, non-threatening way.

There is nothing better than a good question to engage someone in deeper dialogue. What are some ways of asking “good questions” in your context?

7. Listen for the purpose of understanding, not for the purpose of coming to agreement or disagreement.

When we begin to listen for the purpose of understanding we are more likely to hear what is truly being said.

These pieces won’t be stated explicitly in the dialogue Toolkit that follows. As the facilitator, you are encouraged to keep them in mind while listening to the conversation and to look for opportunities to pull the dialogue in towards

them. Facilitating dialogue around these points will lay the groundwork for practical applications of the ideas your group discusses.

OPENING DIALOGUE

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

The *Opening Dialogue* section contains three activities:

- **Short Self-Reflection Exercise:** This activity is a simple, non-threatening way of giving participants an opportunity to engage in self-reflection prior to watching the documentary. The activity involves a series of questions that function as a “guided visualization,” inviting participants to reflect on their personal experiences and history with diverse belief systems. Participants play a passive role in this activity.
 - **Long Self-Reflection Exercise:** This activity begins with the above *Short Self-Reflection Exercise*, but allows time for group discussion and sharing at the end. Participants play an active role in this activity.
 - **Group Activity:** This activity provides a comfortable, anonymous forum for participants to share their thoughts about the upcoming workshop and similarly, to hear responses from others in the group. Participants play an active role in this activity.
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Altogether, the *Opening Dialogue* section should be allotted **10-30 minutes** to complete, depending on whether you are aiming for a one or two-hour long workshop. For a one hour workshop, facilitators should only do the *Short Self-*

Reflection Exercise. For a two hour workshop, facilitators can choose from either the *Long Self-Reflection Exercise* or the *Group Activity*.

SHORT SELF-REFLECTION EXERCISE

Objective: This activity is a simple, non-threatening way of giving participants an opportunity to engage in self-reflection prior to watching the documentary. The activity involves a series of questions that function as a “guided visualization,” inviting participants to reflect on their personal experiences and history with diverse belief systems. Participants play a passive role in this activity.

Instructions: For a one hour workshop, allow **10 minutes** for this *Short Self-Reflection Exercise*, and then watch the video. For a two hour workshop, choose from either the *Long Self-Reflection Exercise* or the *Group Activity*.

A person’s worldview, personal philosophy, religion or spirituality forms a core element of their identity. It becomes a “lens” through which they understand and respond to the world around them. When we are preparing ourselves to understand and respond to ideas that may be different than our own, it is important to have an understanding of the shape of our own lens. It is important to understand how our own experiences and assumptions may influence our perspectives of others.

The *Short Self-Reflection Exercise* involves simply reading from the script below and allowing time between each question for participants to reflect. If your space allows, standing at the back of the room behind the participants can be very effective. When finished, allow a few moments of silence and then proceed to the video.

LONG SELF-REFLECTION EXERCISE

Objective: This activity begins with the previously mentioned *Short Self-Reflection Exercise*, but allows time for group discussion and sharing at the end. Participants play an active role in this activity.

Instructions: For a two hour workshop, allow **30 minutes** for either this *Long Self-Reflection Exercise* or the *Group Activity*.

If you have more time and feel that it is appropriate to allow for deeper dialogue, you may choose to invite participants to share some of their thoughts with the group following the self-reflection exercise. This option should be completely voluntary, as not everyone will be comfortable sharing this information. This long format can allow for some very rich and productive dialogue. It works best with groups that are already familiar with one another, and have developed some level of comfort with dialogue.

Remember, when reading the script it is important to take your time and give ample opportunity for participants to reflect on each question.

Facilitator's Script for *Self-Reflection Exercise*

The documentary we are about to watch explores the relevance and implications of diverse beliefs systems in our communities and workplaces. This is a topic that is very personal and subjective. Your response to this topic will depend a lot upon your own background and experiences.

I'm going to read a series of questions. The questions will invite you to explore your personal experiences with religion and spirituality. I will give time between each question for you to silently think about your answer. Please do not share your answers during this time.

Please make yourself comfortable. You may close your eyes if you like.

Think back to when you were a young child. Try to remember where you were living. What did your house look like? What did your room look like? What do you remember about the friends you had at that time? What sort of things did you enjoy doing?

Was your family part of a faith community? If so, think about your first experience in a faith community. Where was it? Who was there? How did you feel?

As you grew older, you may have started to become aware of different cultures and belief systems around you. Were you part of a faith community at this stage in your life? If so, what do you remember about the people and practices of your faith community at that time? If you were not part of a faith community, do you have any memories of friends or family that were part of a faith community?

Now move forward to when you were a teenager. Prior to this, your family likely had the most influence on your spiritual and social development. At this point, your peers begin to play a more influential role.

Were you part of a faith community at this stage in your life? If so, what do you remember about the people and practices of your faith community at that time? Do you remember having friends from different faith communities? Did anything change for you over this time? If you were not part of a faith community, do you have any memories of friends or family that were part of a faith community?

Con't...

Think about any experiences between the time that you were a teenager and now that may have influenced your perspectives on diverse belief systems. Have any books or movies influenced your thinking? Have any relationships influenced your thinking? Have any religious or spiritual experiences influenced your thinking?

Think about who you are now. How do you define your present belief system? To what extent does your belief system define who you are? What role does your belief system play in the way that you live your day-to-day life?

Do you experience your belief system within a particular religious framework? Do you belong to a faith community? If so, what is the general approach of your faith tradition towards other faith traditions? If you are not part of a faith community, what are your perceptions of those who are?

Think about the ideas and experiences that have come to you during this exercise. What do you need in order to feel comfortable sharing them? What do you want to learn from others, and how can you ensure that they feel comfortable sharing with you?

[Note to facilitators: The “Short Self-Reflection Exercise” ends here. If you are doing the “Long Self-Reflection Exercise,” continue on and open the floor for informal group sharing.]

We will now take a few moments to give opportunity for those who are comfortable to share some of their thoughts and reflections.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Objective: This activity provides a comfortable, anonymous forum for participants to share their thoughts about the upcoming workshop and similarly, to hear responses from others in the group. Participants play an active role in this activity.

Instructions: For a two hour workshop, allow **30 minutes** for either this *Group Activity* or the *Long Self Reflection Exercise*.

Provide participants with two pieces of paper each and something to write with. Read the following script, allowing time after each question for participants to record their answer. Let participants know ahead of time that their responses will be read anonymously out loud to the group, and that they should avoid including any identifying information in their response.

Afterwards, ask participants to hand in their responses. Arrange the papers in a random order, and read the responses aloud to the group.

On the first piece of paper, answer the following question: What do you hope to get out of this workshop?

On the second piece of paper, answer the following question: Is there anything that might make you feel uncomfortable?

VIDEO

Take the next 20 minutes to view the video “Honouring Diverse Beliefs in our Communities.” The video explores a number of questions and perspectives on diverse belief systems in our community. It is divided into four sections:

- Introduction and Context,
- Challenges and Barriers,
- Hopes and Opportunities, and
- Call to Action.

When you are finished, bring the group together again to participate in the *Closing Dialogue* activity.

From Atheism to Zoroastrianism, people draw on different belief systems to guide the ways they think and act. How can we respond to this important element of diversity in our communities? What are the risks involved? What do we stand to gain? Join families, faith communities, and others as they explore these important questions and learn together. You may realize that you have more to offer to this conversation than you think!

STATEMENT OF INCLUSIVITY

Himar Productions Ltd. obtained the footage for this film while participating in the Surrey Neighbouring Faiths Program and recognizes that the footage does not explicitly represent all belief systems.

The images in this documentary represent a sample of diverse beliefs. The production team acknowledges that there is a wide range of ways in which people create for

themselves ultimate meaning, values, and purpose. Although not all belief systems or forms of religious expression are explicitly represented in this documentary, the production team hopes that all viewers find something in the content of this documentary that reflects and affirms what is meaningful to them.

Enjoy the show!

CLOSING DIALOGUE

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

The *Closing Dialogue* section is divided into four sections:

- **Warm-up:** Questions and activities in this section stimulate discussion and get participants comfortable interacting with one another.
 - **Reflection:** Questions and activities in this section promote deeper dialogue by inviting participants to self-reflect and share with one another.
 - **Application:** Questions and activities in this section explore how the topic relates to each person's role in the community or workplace.
 - **Integration:** Questions and activities in this section stimulate thinking about how participants might respond, on a practical level, to the content and experience of this workshop.
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Altogether, the *Closing Dialogue* section should be allotted **20-60 minutes** to complete, depending on whether you are aiming for a one or two-hour long workshop in total.

You will not have time to do all of the questions and activities in each of the sections. At the beginning of each section, you will find suggestions for selecting the appropriate number of questions to fit the intended time-frames of your workshop.

The sections progress from superficial explorations of the topic to deeper more self-reflective questions. Not all questions will be appropriate for each group, and facilitators are encouraged to use their knowledge of the group to select the most appropriate questions. Space is provided at the end of each section to allow facilitators to develop and record their own questions.

WARM-UP

- Objective:** Questions and activities in this section stimulate discussion and get participants comfortable interacting with one another.
- Instructions:** For a one hour workshop, select only one question from this section. Allow approximately **5 minutes** for the *Warm-up* section.
For a two hour workshop, select two to three questions from this section **or** do the activity. Allow approximately **15 minutes** for the *Warm-up* section.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

- As a group, brainstorm how many different faith traditions or types of belief systems you can think of. To what extent are each of these traditions represented in your community?
- As a group, brainstorm different types of religious celebrations that take place in your community. What faith community celebrates them? What is the significance of each celebration?
- As a group, brainstorm different houses of worship that are in your community. What faith community meets there? Does the house of worship have a special name?
- As a group, brainstorm different organizations or institutions in your community that may have some experience or resources related to the topic of diverse beliefs (schools, post-secondary institutions, immigrant and refugee settlement services, multifaith organizations, community development organizations, etc.).
- As a group, brainstorm recent issues in the local media that relate to belief systems in your community.
- Are religious and/or cultural groups spread out in your community or are there neighbourhoods in which the residents are predominantly from one particular religious or cultural group?
- Additional questions:

*W*ARM-UP GROUP ACTIVITY

This activity is good for getting people moving and interacting. It is a fun way to demonstrate how we are all interconnected, and that everyone's contributions are important. You will need a large ball of string or yarn and a number of balloons. You will want to inflate the balloons prior to the activity.

Have participants stand in a circle facing the center. One person holds the end of the string and tosses the ball of string to a person on the opposite side of the circle. The ball will unravel, leaving a stretch of string between the two people. The second person holds on to the string and tosses the ball of string across the circle to another person, leaving a second length of string stretched across the circle. This process continues until the ball of string has been passed back and forth across the circle numerous times, forming a web in the space between the participants.

At this point, you can point out how the web can be seen as a metaphor for our interconnectedness and our need to value everyone's contributions.

Finish the activity by dropping the balloons on to the web and seeing how many your web can hold!

REFLECTION

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- Objective:** Questions and activities in this section promote deeper dialogue by inviting participants to self-reflect and share with one another.
- Instructions:** For a one hour workshop, select only one question from this section. Allow approximately **5 minutes** for the *Reflection* section.
For a two hour workshop, select two to three questions from this section **or** do the activity. Allow approximately **15 minutes** for the *Reflection* section.
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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What belief systems or faith traditions are you already knowledgeable about?
- Is there a specific belief system or faith tradition that you would like to learn more about? What are you curious about?
- Were there any ideas expressed in this documentary that resonated with you? Why? Were there any ideas expressed in this documentary that made you feel uncomfortable? Why?
- How do you feel about discussing the topic of religion and spirituality? Is it a comfortable topic for you? Is it a difficult topic for you? Why?
- How do you think learning about diverse belief systems might change the way you see your community? How might it change the way you see yourself? How might it change the way you do your work?
- Think about personal perspectives surrounding belief systems that are different from your own. What perspectives might be helpful for you as you learn about this element of diversity? What perspectives might act as a barrier?
- Additional questions:

REFLECTION GROUP ACTIVITY

Provide participants with two pieces of paper each and something to write with. Read the following script to participants.

Afterwards, allow the group some time to reflect and record their answers. When ready, bring the group back together again. Invite those who are comfortable to share their responses with the group.

Using this exercise as an example, shift the exercise to discussion around behaviours and attitudes that may change in the process of becoming more honouring of diverse beliefs.

As a group, brainstorm some of the *behaviours* that may change in the process of becoming more honouring of diverse beliefs.

As a group, brainstorm some of the *attitudes* that may change in the process of becoming more honouring of diverse beliefs.

Incorporating new information into our working or daily lives involves a process of change. If the new information is unfamiliar to us or uncomfortable for us, this process of change can be difficult. There are two main ways in which we change. They are sometimes referred to as *First Order Change* and *Second Order Change*. While both are important, there are some key differences.

With *First Order Change*, we adapt to change by taking in new information and changing the way we do things. We change our actions and behaviours to best respond to the new information. We experience change in the practical ways we act.

With *Second Order Change*, we open ourselves up to allow the information to affect change within us at a deeper level. We shift our perspectives and see things in new ways. We experience change in our underlying beliefs and assumptions.

Think about a time when you experienced change in your community or personal life. Think about how you responded to it.

At the top of one piece of paper, write the word “behaviours,” at the top of the second piece of paper, write the word “attitudes.” Thinking about your specific example of change, how did your behaviours change? How did your attitudes change? On your own, record your thoughts under the appropriate heading.

APPLICATION

- Objective:** Questions and activities in this section explore how the topic relates to each person’s role in the community or workplace.
- Instructions:** For a one hour workshop, select only one question from this section. Allow approximately **5 minutes** for the *Application* section.
For a two hour workshop, select two to three questions from this section. Allow approximately **15 minutes** for the *Application* section.
-

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- Does your organization have any policies that relate to the topic of diverse beliefs?
- Think about the capacity in which you relate to others in your community or workplace. What role might a person’s worldview, personal philosophy, religious or spiritual tradition have in this relationship? How is this topic relevant to the work you do?
- The documentary explored examples of *Challenges and Barriers*, and *Hopes and Opportunities*. In regards to honouring diverse belief systems, what are some of the *Challenges and Barriers* in your community or workplace? What are some of the *Hopes and Opportunities*?
- How might knowledge of diverse belief systems support the work you do? How might this knowledge make you more effective or productive in your workplace or community?
- What are the risks involved in honouring the diverse belief systems in our communities? What are the risks involved in NOT learning about the diversity of belief systems in our communities?
- Imagine yourself being more knowledgeable and responsive to diverse belief systems in your community or workplace. What might change in the way you interact with people? How might people respond?
- How might you inspire curiosity about this topic in your workplace or community?
- Additional questions:

INTEGRATION

Objective: Questions and activities in this section stimulate thinking about how participants might respond on a practical level to the content and experience of this workshop.

Instructions: For a one hour workshop, select only one question from this section. Allow approximately **5 minutes** for the *Integration* section.
For a two hour workshop, select two to three questions from this section. Allow approximately **15 minutes** for the *Integration* section.

INTEGRATION QUESTIONS

- What experiences have you had that relate to this topic? Have you had any experiences that might be helpful for the group to hear?
- What resources do you have that relate to this topic? Do you have any resources that might be helpful to share with the group?
- The process of honouring diverse beliefs may involve some level of change in you or your organization. What do you think will happen if you don't initiate this change? Why might you want to initiate this change?
- If you feel that it is important to create opportunities in your community or workplace to begin learning about diverse belief systems, what would those opportunities look like for you? What might you be able to contribute?
- There are many ways to learn about the diversity of belief systems in your community. Below is a list of different ways that one might consider. What is your level of comfort with each? Which would you find more helpful? Are there ones that would make you uncomfortable?
 - Reading about a belief system that is unfamiliar to you
 - Learning through conversation with someone whose belief system is different from your own
 - Visiting and touring a house of worship that is unfamiliar to you
 - Participating in a celebration or festival that is unfamiliar to you
 - Attending the worship service of a religious tradition that is unfamiliar to you
 - Participating in a worship service that is unfamiliar to you (lighting candles, repeating words, bowing, etc.)
- How can we ask questions that seek to bring us to a point of understanding, as opposed to asking questions that seek to bring us to a point of either agreeing or disagreeing? What are some characteristics of a good question? What are some examples of good questions?
- Additional questions:

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

LOCATION:

DATE:

PRESENTER:

WHAT WENT WELL...

I WISH...

SOMETHING I LEARNED...

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

RESOURCES

MULTIFAITH ORGANIZATIONS

SURREY NEIGHBOURING FAITHS PROGRAM

The Surrey Neighbouring Faiths Program (SNFP) builds community capacity for multifaith learning and dialogue with a focus on children and families. To this end, the SNFP offers a range of locally developed programs and resources to support children, parents and caregivers in learning about religious diversity.

Website: www.snfp.ca
Contact: David Dalley, Program Coordinator
davidanderin@dalley.ca
(604) 502-8661

MULTIFAITH ACTION SOCIETY

The Multifaith Action Society is a Vancouver-based multifaith organization that aims to: 1) Promote interfaith and multifaith dialogue and understanding, 2) Provide information and resources on world religions to the community, 3) Encourage all people of faith to collaborate on vital community programs, particularly those which provide support and advocacy for marginalized citizens or groups or foster the well-being of the community as a whole, and 4) Cooperate with other agencies and organizations to promote initiatives that contribute to the common good. They publish the popular Multifaith Calendar that lists dates and descriptions of over 350 observances, including events from 14 world religions.

Website: www.multifaithaction.org
Phone: (604) 321-1302

GLOBAL CLERGY ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

The Global Clergy Association is a network of clergy from a range of faith communities in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The aim of the Association is: "To promote spirituality, peace, non-violence, harmony, respect and understanding amongst religious communities." Their mission statement is: "Love for all and hatred for none."

Contact: Acharya S.P. Dwivedi
spdwwivedi@shaw.ca

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING AND DIALOGUE

EMBRACEBC

EmbraceBC is a program of the Government of British Columbia dedicated to “promoting multiculturalism and eliminating racism in British Columbia.” The website offers a range of information on funding opportunities, local resources and initiatives taking place throughout the province.

Website: www.embracebc.ca

BRITISH COLUMBIA HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

BC Healthy Communities is an organization that offer programs and resources to support their vision that: “All BC communities continually create and improve the social, environmental and economic assets that support health, well-being and the capacity to realize their fullest potential.” BC Healthy Communities is part of the Healthy Communities and Cities movement – active in Canada and in more than 80 other countries.

Website: www.bchealthycommunities.ca

INITIATIVES OF CHANGE (CANADA)

Initiatives of Change is a diverse network of people committed to building relationships of trust across the world's divides. Initiatives of Change works on the principle that changes in people's motives, attitudes and behaviours are not only possible but are the only sure basis on which wider lasting change in society can be brought about.

Website: www.ca.iofc.org

INTERFAITH EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Interfaith Education Program was founded in September 2000 by Harold Rosen. Since then, Harold has been designing and teaching courses on world religion for both community and university audiences. His aim is to facilitate interfaith understanding and cooperation, as well as to provide hope for humanity's spiritual progress.

Website: www.interfaitheducation.org

ICE INTERCULTURAL SERVICES INC.

ICE Intercultural Services Inc. is an award winning consulting and education firm that helps organizations and individuals become better equipped to work more effectively across a multitude of cultures. The firm offers custom-designed strategies for starting public awareness campaigns, fundraising, marketing products or services to multi-ethnic communities, and training for staff to work effectively across cultures.

Website: www.iceintercultural.com

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

THE CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE – SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

The Centre for Dialogue at SFU offers a range of programs and resources that support dialogue and community capacity building. The Certificate in Dialogue and Civic Engagement offers a training ground for emerging citizen leaders to frame issues, convene dialogue, create visions, tell good stories and build collaborative teams and coalitions.

Website: www.sfu.ca/dialog/study+practice/index.html

CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN RELIGION AND SOCIETY – UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

The Centre for Studies in Religion and Society is a leading centre in Canada for scholarly interdisciplinary research on topics at the intersection of religion and public life. They host several national public policy research networks, sponsor visiting fellowships for senior and junior scholars and members of the community, and produce a dynamic annual program of public lectures and seminars.

Website: www.csrs.uvic.ca

IONA PACIFIC INTER-RELIGIOUS CENTRE – UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Iona Pacific Inter-Religious Centre is the inter-religious and multi-cultural context for Vancouver School of Theology's core work of preparing leaders for tomorrow's world. The Centre researches and implements new ways of facing critical local and global challenges to the well-being of the next generation of our shared communities. It draws upon the world's wisdom traditions in order to foster a common sense of purpose, respect for differences, and socially engaged learning with academic and lay leaders, elders and youth, from North America and beyond.

Website: www.ionapacific.ca

RESOURCES

“RELIGIONS OF OUR NEIGHBORS: A COMPREHENSIVE, NON-ACADEMIC OVERVIEW OF SEVERAL RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS”

In the early 1970s Sid Bentley, a school teacher in Surrey, British Columbia, developed a course, “Religions of our Neighbours,” which he went on to teach for about 25 years and which was widely adopted in the BC school system. The content of the course was later compiled into this popular book. Mr. Bentley’s course and curriculum laid the groundwork for multifaith education in B.C. The original book is out of print, but a revised and updated edition will be available soon. For information contact Mr. Bentley directly at:

Phone: (604) 538-4766

“WHAT CANADIANS THINK OF SIKHS, JEWS, CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS . . .”

This article appears in the May 4, 2009 (Volume 122, Number 16) edition of MacLean’s Magazine: “Canadians like to think of their country as a model for the world of how all sorts of people can get along together. But when it comes to the major faiths other than Christianity, a new poll conducted for Maclean’s finds that many Canadians harbour deeply troubling biases.”

Online: www2.macleans.ca/2009/04/28/what-canadians-think-of-sikhs-jews-christians-muslims/

“RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY: SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR MONOTHEISM”

This article by Rita M. Gross first appeared in Wisconsin Dialogue: A Faculty Journal for the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire 11 (1991): 35-48. She begins by postulating that “...cultural diversity and religious diversity are often evaluated quite differently.” After an insightful and provocative exploration of this topic, she concludes her comments on religious diversity “...with the suggestion that genuine pluralism offers much, much more by way of fundamental enrichment, both of life in general and of the religious life.” This article is sure to stimulate discussion.

Online: www.crosscurrents.org/gross.htm

“RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN CANADA”

The Policy Research Initiative (PRI) is a policy research organization for the whole of the federal government, specializing in early stage work on issues involving several federal departments. The PRI recently dedicated an entire edition of its periodical “Horizons” to the topic of “Religious Diversity in Canada” (March 2009, Volume 10 Number 2). The organization also offers a number of other related resources.

Online: www.policyresearch.gc.ca and search for “religious diversity”

“CULTURAL COMPETENCY: A SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS”

This comprehensive guide was published in 2000 by the Cultural Diversity Institute in Calgary, Alberta. It “presents a cultural diversity lens through which human service organizations may come to understand cultural competency, to reflect upon their structures, policies and procedures, and to plan and implement culturally competent practices.” It concludes with a list of additional resources.

Online: www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/cns/fcss/cultural_competency_self_assesment_guide.pdf

ONLINE RESOURCES

SCARBORO MISSIONS

Scarboro Missions is a Society of Canadian Catholics, priests and laity that places a high value on interfaith dialogue. Their website offers numerous interfaith resources including the popular Golden Rule Poster. The Golden Rule Poster features interpretations of the golden rule as it appears in the sacred writings of 13 religious traditions. The poster is supported by a range of curriculum and dialogue resources.

Website: http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/index.php

RELIGIONFACTS.COM

The goal of ReligionFacts is to provide free, reliable information about a range of diverse belief systems as well as the rituals and customs that go along with them. The website includes articles on a wide variety of world religions, both ancient and modern, as well as "ways of life," philosophies, mind-body teachings, and even some anti-religion systems like ancient Epicureanism and modern atheism. ReligionFacts is an objective guide and does not promote any one religion or belief system nor even a particular view of religion. Their only "value statements" are: (1) religion is interesting; (2) knowledge is good.

Website: www.religionfacts.com

BELIEFNET.COM

BeliefNet.com is a fun, popular website that contains interesting and accessible information on a range of diverse belief systems. Their mission is: "To help people like you find and walk a spiritual path that will bring comfort, hope, clarity, strength, and happiness." A fun, popular feature of the website is the "Belief-O-Matic" questionnaire that is described as follows: "Even if YOU don't know what faith you are, Belief-O-Matic™ knows. Answer 20 questions about your concept of God, the afterlife, human nature, and more, and Belief-O-Matic™ will tell you what religion (if any) you practice...or ought to consider practicing. Warning: Belief-O-Matic™ assumes no legal liability for the ultimate fate of your soul!"

Website: www.beliefnet.com
Belief-O-Matic™: www.beliefnet.com/Entertainment/Quizzes/BeliefOMatic.aspx

INTERFAITHUNITY.CA

Interfaith Unity is a free Canadian publication of Interfaith and Inter-Spiritual activities, news, and resources, in Toronto, Southern Ontario, Nationally and Internationally. It is a great way to connect with the interfaith movement across Canada.

Website: www.interfaithunity.ca