

Kicking Down Diversity Barriers On Canadian Campuses

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According to StatsCan, there are over 200 languages spoken on Toronto streets these days. Even more surprising, 50% of Toronto's population was born outside of Canada. No wonder why the United Nations regards Toronto as the most multicultural city in the world. Although the figures may not be as staggering in other Canadian cities, the trend of increasing diversity is still noticeable right across Canada.

So the reality of today's environment in Canada is that ethnic and cultural diversity is here to stay. Whether it's inside offices, factories or outside with customers, we will likely encounter more people from different cultures than ever before.

College and University campuses are also getting more diverse student populations. Not only have many foreign students been choosing to attend Canadian schools for their higher education, Canadian-born visible minorities who were children of immigrants from around the world are also making it onto our campuses now.

With the additional influx of students from our Native Canadian communities as well, the campus scene is certainly very different from what is looked like a generation or two ago. But college diversity is not just about differences in race or culture. Canadians from the west coast, Maritimes, Prairies, Quebec and Ontario, all have some interesting regional



differences. These can also be found on campuses and does represent a form of diversity as well. But let's not stop there. Diversity also includes people from different religions, sexual orientations and those who are handicapped. Inclusion is vital.

With so much diversity on campuses these days, Colleges and Universities need to know how to manage this in order to ensure that diversity becomes a positive rather than a negative experience for students and staff. In fact, arming students with some skills in the form of diversity education will definitely help them function better both on campus and in their future careers given today's diverse working world.

Companies that ignore the need for diversity education will soon lose out in the global business world of today. Forward thinking companies will recruit and retain the best overall talent. These organizations will also be able to target diverse markets effectively. But companies need people who are well versed with diversity skills to make this happen.

Unfortunately, diversity skills are not usually part of the standard educational curriculums at Colleges and

Universities. This causes barriers to go up between people from different backgrounds. However, this represents a huge opportunity for campus activities programmers to help supplement essential diversity skills for students. Cultural events can be organized where students and staff learn more about different cultures, especially if they are already represented in the student body or staff on campus.

Outside speakers who speak on diversity topics can also be brought in to help students and staff develop diversity skills. These skills will help both students and staff function more effectively to kick down diversity barriers.

Clint Cora is an author, motivational and diversity speaker. He has worked with diversity during his entire 20-year corporate career. He is also a karate world champion and former member of the Canadian National Karate Team. More details about his speaking programs can be found at www.clintcora.com

