



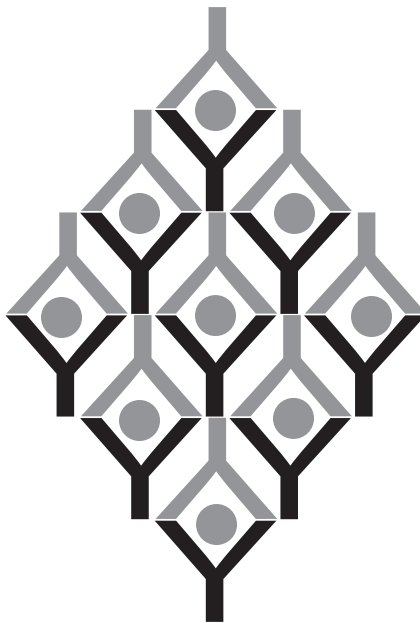
# Belonging, Learning, and Growing

Kindergarten to Grade 12  
Action Plan for  
Ethnocultural Equity

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# ***BELONGING, LEARNING, AND GROWING***

*Kindergarten to Grade 12  
Action Plan for  
Ethnocultural Equity*



**2006**

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the results of the 2003-2004 consultations concerning Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth's proposed *Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity* (2003), and provides direction for current and future initiatives concerning diversity and ethnocultural equity.

### The Consultation Process

A series of consultations with partner groups was held between November 2003 and October 2004 and included regional sessions with school division teams, round-table discussions with partner organizations and community groups, a teacher and learner consultation session, and written submissions.

### Summary of Highlights and Major Findings

- **General support for the proposed Action Plan:** In all the consultation sessions, participants consistently voiced support for the proposed actions and the comprehensiveness of the plan. They emphasized that an equitable school system is one where all students feel that they belong, will experience rich learning opportunities, and be encouraged to achieve their full personal, social, and academic potential.
- **Some questioning of the Department's commitment to implementing the proposed plan:** While supporting the proposed plan, many participants expressed frustration with the slowness of change, lack of resources, and incomplete implementation of past initiatives.
- **Building capacity through better and more effective teacher professional-learning opportunities and teacher resources:** Participants expressed the belief that programs for teacher education, teacher induction, and teacher in-servicing must address student diversity in meaningful ways and provide more intensive and effective learning opportunities. Many voiced the need for resources that provide effective and practical ideas for classroom practice.
- **Racism continues to limit students' opportunities for success:** Participants clearly expressed the fact that "everyday" racism, and individual and systemic forms of racism continue to limit many students' opportunities for success. It is impossible for students to feel that they belong and experience a welcoming learning environment when racism is a daily experience.

- **Communities want to be involved and can be powerful partners:** Representatives from various cultural groups expressed a strong desire to work with school divisions and schools in initiatives related to education in general, and to diversity and equity specifically. For this to happen, communication between schools and community groups needs to be improved and there must be a recognition of the value of such partnerships.
- **Urgent need to enhance English as an Additional Language (EAL) supports and programs for newcomer and linguistically diverse communities:** There was widespread support for the Kindergarten to Senior 4 ESL\* Program Review and the full implementation of the recommendations.
- **Recognition that the proposed ethnocultural Action Plan complements Aboriginal education initiatives and goals:** Participants in various consultations expressed support for the plan and saw many linkages with goals for Aboriginal education.
- **Educators are not reflective of the rich cultural and linguistic diversity that is Manitoba:** Most participants emphasized the need to strengthen efforts to create a more inclusive and representative teaching force and educational institutions.

***Belonging, Learning, and Growing: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity (2006–2008)***

The 2003-2004 consultations were the basis for the refinement and further development of the draft ethnocultural equity Action Plan, proposed in 2003. *Belonging, Learning, and Growing: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity (2006–2008)* comprises 19 actions organized into five categories:

- Building Capacity to Respond to the Needs of Diverse Learners
- Engaging Parents, Students, and Educators
- Resources for Building Inclusive Schools and Classrooms
- Policy Renewal and New Guidelines
- Enhancing Teacher Diversity

For a full list and description of the actions, see page 25.

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\* Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is implementing a change from the term English as a Second Language (ESL) programming to **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** programming in recognition of the fact that many learners speak a number of languages in addition to English.

## INTRODUCTION

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*Belonging, Learning, and Growing: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity* results from consultation and dialogue with community and partner organizations in 2003–2004, regarding the draft document, *Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity*. This report is composed of two parts: the first summarizes input from the consultation sessions, discusses some important concepts, and provides other relevant information; the second proposes a multi-year Action Plan that will further ethnocultural equity in Manitoba.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth has had a long-term commitment to addressing the issues of diversity and equity. In the early 1980s, Manitoba initiated its first efforts to create schools that are more inclusive. English as an additional language (EAL) programming and support, enhancements in heritage language education, and a number of multicultural education initiatives were launched. The Department's vision and hopes for creating a more inclusive school system were captured in the 1992 policy document *Multicultural Education: A Policy for the 1990s*. Manitoba was one of the first provinces to have such a policy and it has guided our work to date.

In the period following the release of the policy, the Department focused its attention on promoting and supporting anti-racism education initiatives in schools and classrooms. Since 1996, the Department has worked to make curricula more inclusive and responsive to Manitoba's diverse student population. The social studies curriculum development process, which included the participation of a Cultural Advisory Committee, is one example of recent efforts to ensure that the voices of all of Manitoba's people are heard in the Manitoba curriculum. The Cultural Advisory Committee comprised representatives from various community and cultural organizations, representing a cross-section of Manitoba's diverse cultural and linguistic groups. The committee was instrumental in the development of the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) and the Manitoba social studies curriculum frameworks. In addition, Francophone and Aboriginal peoples were involved as full participants from the outset of the social studies curriculum development process.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth believes that recent efforts to make all curricula more inclusive and responsive will result in engaging and inclusive classrooms. However, we need to find ways to encourage and support excellence in instructional programming and classroom practice. Professional learning opportunities for educators and the opportunity to share successful models will be important.

## **RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE SOCIETY**

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The Action Plan is an important aspect of a broader commitment to enhancing diversity and equity. It complements and expands on the primary goal of the *Manitoba K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success, 2002-2006*, (hereinafter referred to as the Education Agenda), which is to improve the educational outcomes of all learners, especially less successful learners.

The Action Plan also supports related initiatives, including the Government's Diversity and Employment Equity Policy, Safe Schools legislation, Bill 13: Appropriate Educational Programming, Community Schools Partnership Initiative, Early Behaviour Intervention, Early Childhood Development Initiative, Early Literacy Intervention Initiative, Students at Risk and Special Needs Funding, Healthy Child Manitoba, Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant, Aboriginal Education Action Plan 2004-2007, Gender Equity, and Adult Literacy and Learning initiatives. Together these initiatives seek to reduce inequities in educational outcomes for students of diverse origins and socio-economic status.

The reality of living in a diverse and pluralistic society, regardless of one's origins and social contexts, necessitates that students have the opportunity to experience schooling that is culturally appropriate and relevant, encourages social caring, and challenges prejudice and discrimination. The relationship between the *Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity* and the Department's *Aboriginal Education Action Plan* provides a good example of how these initiatives or thrusts are related and how each works towards enhancing our diversity and equity goals. Virtually every Aboriginal education study or report has stressed the need for cross-cultural and anti-bias education for teachers and students in the educational system. It is important to recognize that developing an appreciation and informed knowledge about the unique place of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is an essential part of anti-racism education.

Equally important is that the Action Plan complements the government's commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity and equity issues, as demonstrated by initiatives such as the creation of the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council.

## **CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHALLENGES**

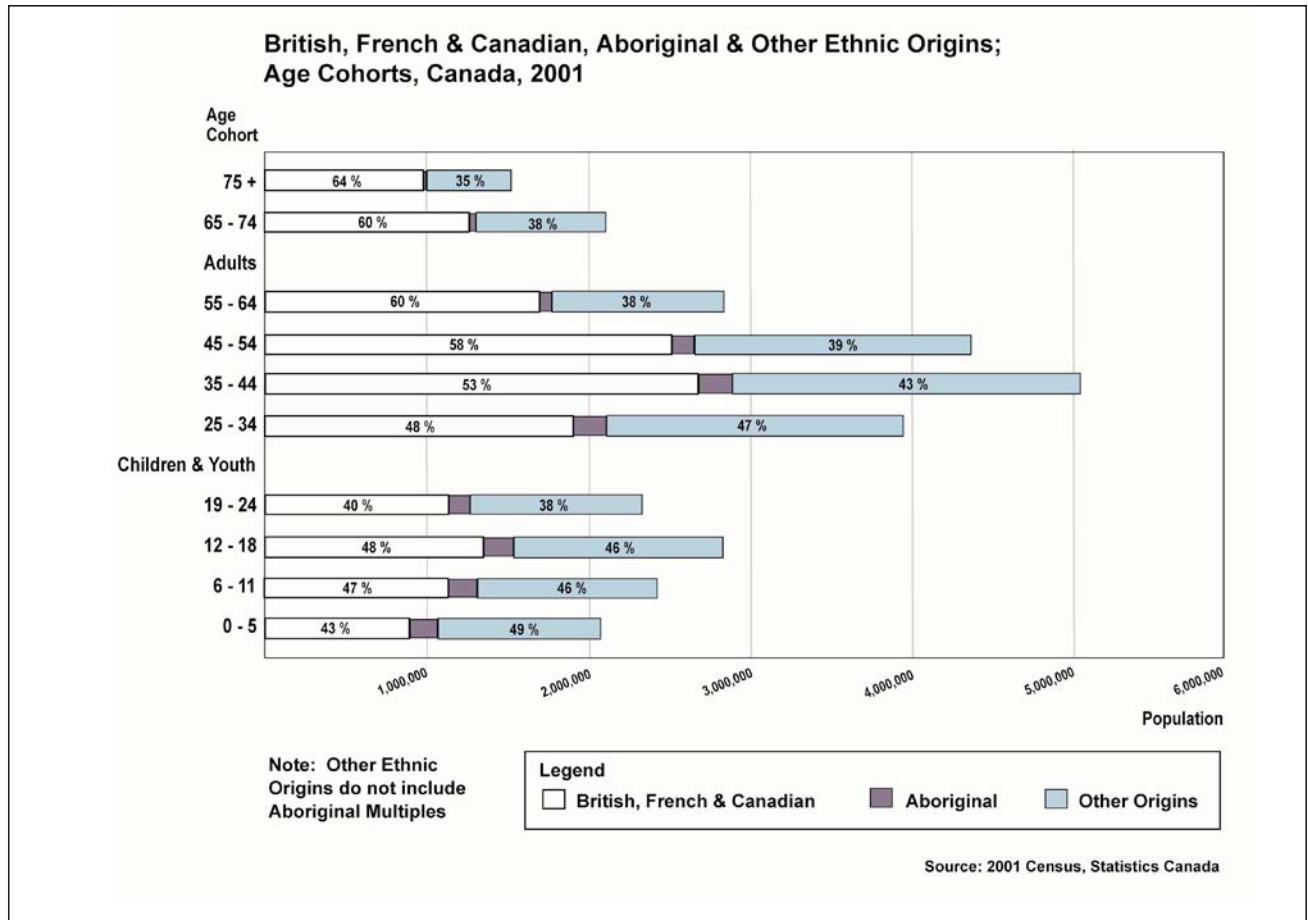
In the last decade there have been significant social, economic, and educational developments in Manitoba, as well as changes in the nature of student population.

Immigration has played a crucial role in ensuring Manitoba's continued economic growth. Manitoba has made a commitment to double the number of immigrants attracted to the province. It is expected that immigration to Manitoba will grow over the next decade. The increased linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity of learners requires more effective responses to their educational needs, to ensure their success in school. Changes in settlement patterns mean more schools and school divisions are challenged to provide local programming for EAL learners.

The graphs that follow, based on the 2001 Census, provide a sense of the changing nature of diversity among school-aged children and youth, including young adults.

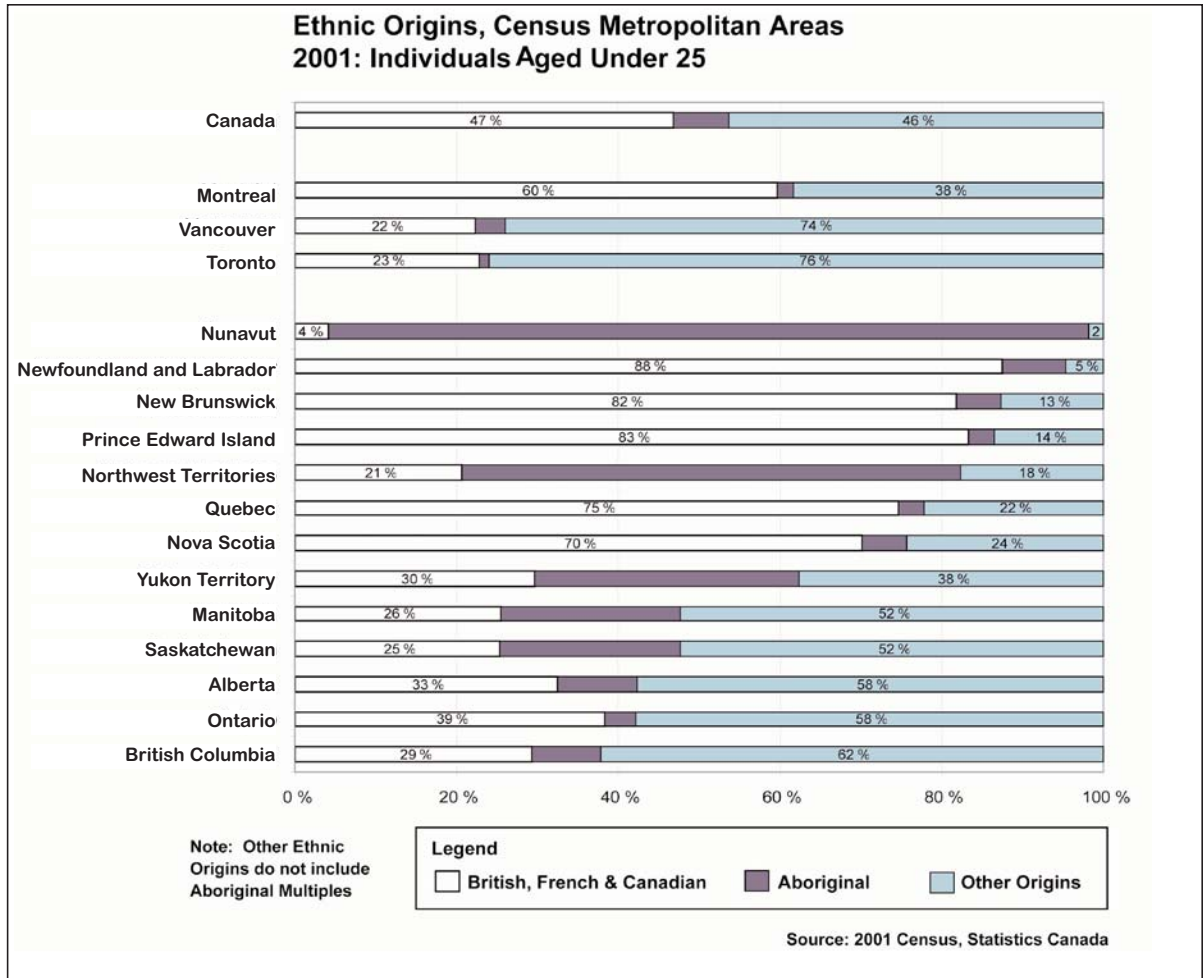
Graph 1 demonstrates that children and youth in Canada are more diverse ethnically than their adult cohorts. A much larger percentage of all children and youth cohorts report being of Aboriginal or non-English and non-French ethnic origins. In all cases, English, French, and Canadian ethnic origins constitute less than 50 per cent of all children and youth cohorts, whereas in adult cohorts, from 55 years of age onwards, these ethnicities account for 60 per cent or more of each cohort.

Graph 1



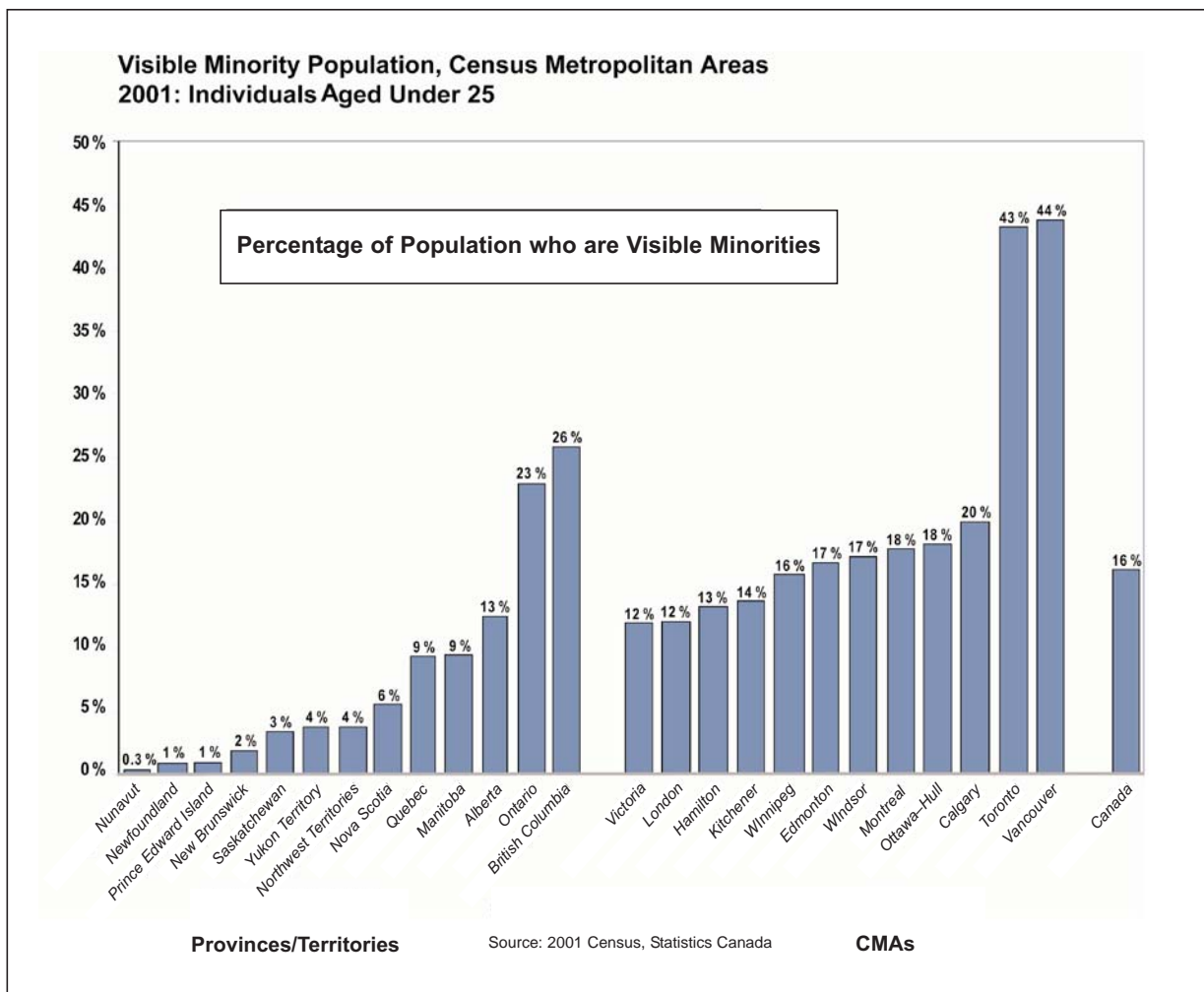
Graph 2 indicates how ethnic diversity varies across different regions of Canada. Generally, the western provinces are much more diverse than Eastern Canada. However, two of the three largest urban centres, Toronto and Vancouver, are also very ethnically diverse with the percentage of their populations that report English, French, or Canadian origins constituting only 23 and 22 per cent of their populations respectively. In Manitoba, 74 per cent of the population reports Aboriginal or other ethnic origins.

**Graph 2**



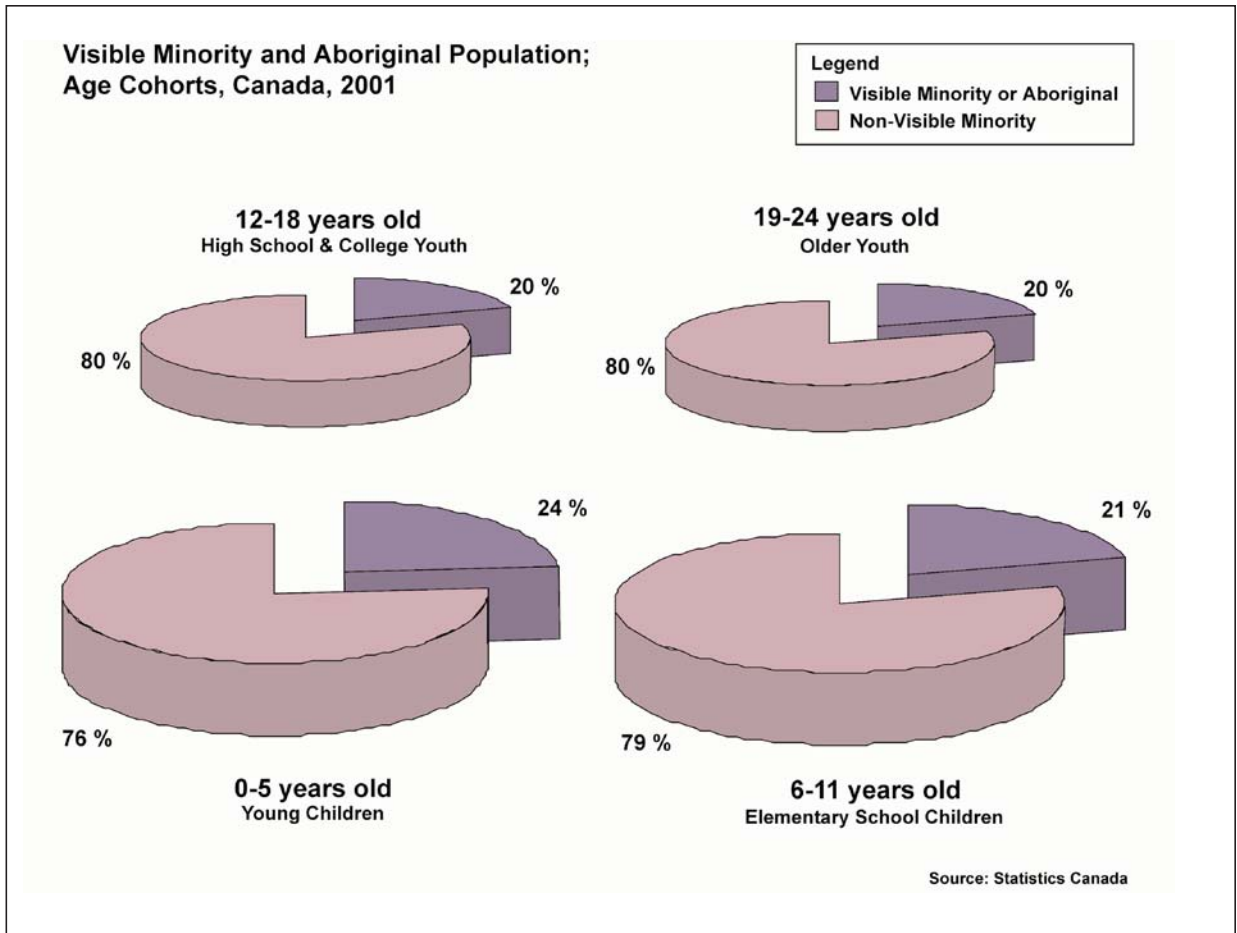
Our cultural composition is also changing. The number of Canadians who report visible minority ethnic origins is growing across Canada as a result of immigration patterns and other factors. As indicated in Graph 3, this is especially true in larger urban centres where the percentage of the visible minority population varies from 12 per cent in Victoria to 44 per cent in Vancouver. In Winnipeg, citizens of visible minority origins constitute 16 per cent of the population, which is also the national average.

**Graph 3**



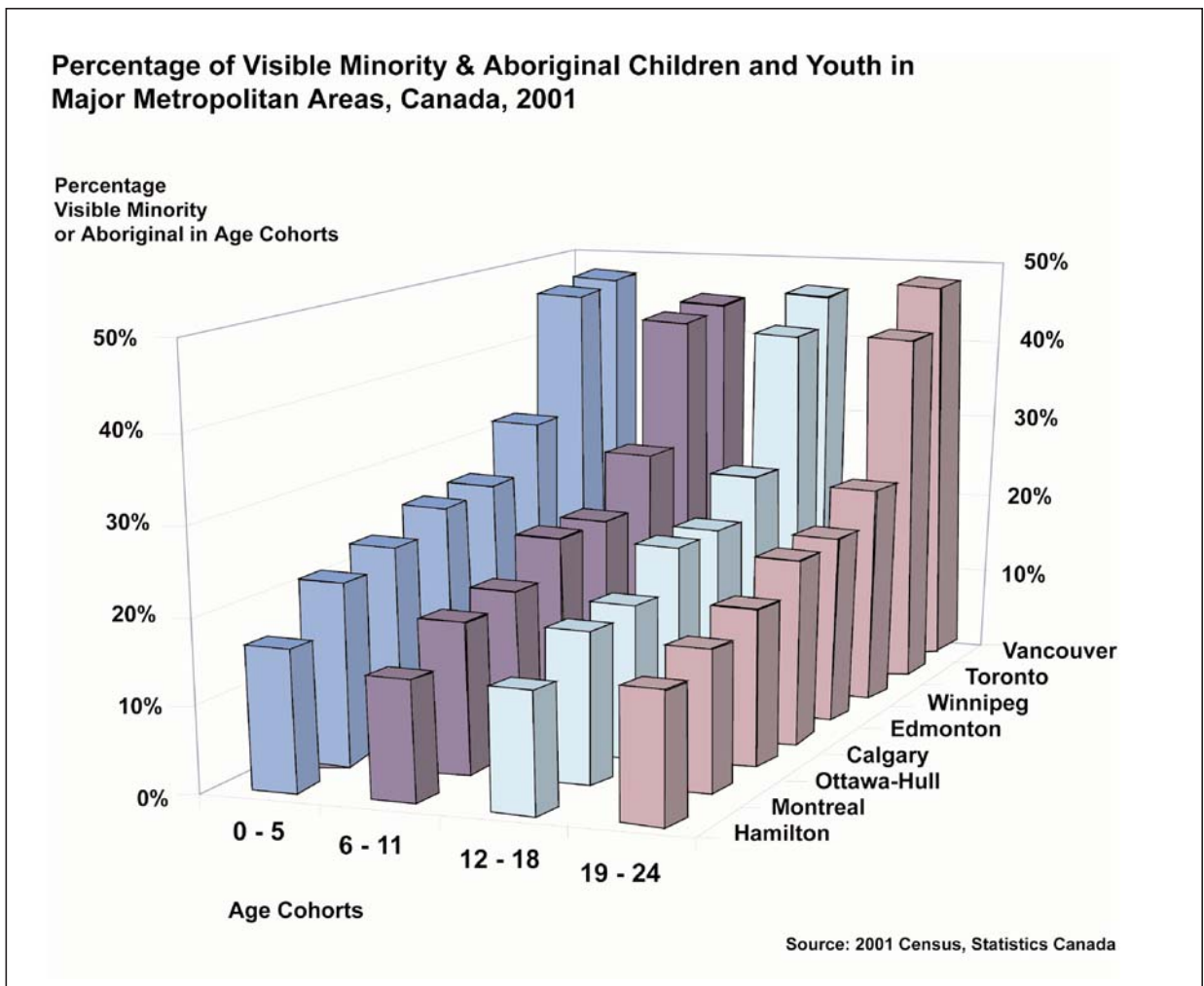
Graph 4 indicates that children and youth in all age cohorts are more likely to be of visible minority or Aboriginal origins. In the youngest age cohort of 0-5 years they constitute 24 per cent of all children in the cohort. This suggests that children who are just entering or soon entering our schools will increasingly be from a variety of Aboriginal and visible minority origins.

**Graph 4**



Not surprisingly, as larger urban centres tend to have a greater percentage of citizens of Aboriginal and visible minority background, schools in urban centres will experience significant changes in the cultural composition of their school populations. Graph 5 indicates that in Vancouver and Toronto, school-aged children and youth of Aboriginal or visible minority origins are approaching the 50 per cent level. Winnipeg ranks third in this respect. Over 30 per cent of the 0-5 age cohort are of Aboriginal or visible minority origins, and range from approximately 27 per cent to 22 per cent for other age cohorts.

**Graph 5**



## **RE-ENERGIZING OUR COMMITMENT AND CHARTING A NEW COURSE**

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The Department values the linguistic and cultural diversity that characterizes communities and schools in Manitoba. It is committed to providing inclusive and equitable learning environments and programming for all students. While Manitoba has made some meaningful progress in building a more inclusive school system and improving the educational opportunities for a broader range of learners, more work needs to be done to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to experience success. Through the Education Agenda, the new *Belonging, Learning, and Growing: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity (2006–2008)*, and other related initiatives, the Department presents a comprehensive and meaningful plan that will help build schools committed to social justice, equality, democratic government, equitable economic opportunity for all, intellectual freedom, environmental protection, and human rights.

## ***DIVERSITY AND EQUITY—IMPORTANT CONCEPTS***

The Department's thinking and actions are based on a framework of core beliefs that include three important concepts: diversity, equity, and ethnocultural equity. A working definition of these concepts is given below.

**Diversity**—encompasses all the ways in which human beings are both similar and different. It means understanding and accepting the uniqueness of all individuals as well as respecting their differences. It is ultimately about acceptance and respect for difference.

**Equity**—is a concept that flows directly from our concern for equality and social justice in a democratic society. Educational equity refers most broadly to a condition of fairness with respect to educational opportunities, access, and outcomes for all people. Departmental initiatives towards equity are intended to remove barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices.

The use of these two terms together signals the importance of departmental initiatives towards building acceptance and respect for human differences and eliminating systemic barriers and impediments to educational equity, both in policy and practice.

**Ethnocultural Equity**—as used in this document focuses on ethnocultural diversity and equity issues and goals. By ethnocultural we mean diversity related to cultural, linguistic, religious, and “racial” aspects of human diversity.

### **Principles**

The following principles have informed our thinking about diversity and equity.

- Respect for diversity is essential for the education system to meet the needs of all learners.
- All students and families must have equitable opportunities to participate fully in the education system in Manitoba. To achieve this, the removal of systemic and institutional barriers is essential.
- Communication and collaboration throughout the whole system are key to the achievement of goals.
- To be effective, diversity and equity education policies and initiatives must be well developed, meaningful, inclusive, and collaborative.
- Leadership and monitoring of progress are critical for the successful implementation of a diversity and equity strategy.

## Goals

Our efforts to achieve outcomes that are more equitable for linguistically and culturally diverse students have the following goals. To ensure that:

- All students have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of school life in an inclusive and affirming manner.
- All students experience culturally and personally relevant learning that engages them and encourages a sense of community and belonging that promotes socially responsible behaviour and action.
- All students become knowledgeable about human diversity, the multicultural nature of Canada, and Aboriginal peoples, both from a historical and contemporary perspective.
- All students, regardless of origin or gender, complete their secondary education and access post-secondary education and training that will enable them to flourish and participate fully in the community and in the workplace.

## **ABOUT THE ACTION PLAN FOR ETHNOCULTURAL EQUITY CONSULTATIONS**

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The decision for Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth to launch a consultation process concerning the status of diversity and equity in 2003-2004 was driven by several factors. The Department's Education Agenda helped to focus attention on the needs of diverse learners, and re-energize efforts aimed at reducing educational disparities. Further, there was a need to evaluate the effectiveness of EAL programming and supports introduced over the last two decades.

Input and reaction to the draft *Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity* (2003) document was solicited through written submissions as well as at numerous consultative sessions held throughout the province between October 2003 and October 2004. Consultation participants included:

- school division teams
- the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advocacy and Advisory Council
- various Aboriginal groups
- the MB4Youth Advisory Council
- the Manitoba Association for Multicultural Education
- the Manitoba Teachers' Society/Manitoba Teachers of English as a Second Language
- other participants at regional meetings, round-table discussions, a teacher and learner consultation session, and focus group reviews

These consultations assisted in providing

- information on the current state of diversity and ethnocultural equity and the challenges experienced by schools and learners
- information on how the province can strengthen diversity and equity programming through consultation, and by drawing on research and experience in Canada and internationally
- suggestions for enhancements and additions that have formed the basis for the Department's Action Plan to strengthen diversity and equity throughout the system

## WHAT WE LEARNED

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### Diversity and Equity in Education

Below are the findings resulting from the consultation sessions that followed the release of the October 2003 consultation document *Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity*. Collectively, the findings have helped shape this report, assisted in refining proposed initiatives, and identified challenges that may be encountered in implementing the proposed Action Plan. The findings and results of the consultation are organized by categories that emerged during the analysis of the sessions and the consultation document themes.

### General Comments

Overall, the response to *Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity (2003)* was very positive and reinforced the need for an action plan. Some participants expressed concern that various initiatives previously proposed were not already in place. However, participants and respondents generally praised the specific initiatives that comprise the proposed Action Plan. Throughout the process, participants representing different perspectives all expressed support for initiatives that reduce educational disparities, are anti-racist in nature, and promote intercultural understanding. They also supported initiatives that will increase our capacity to address the needs of diverse learners and lead to improved educational outcomes for all learners.

At each consultation session, participants attested to the lingering and powerful effects of racism in education. Participants spoke of “everyday” racism in the form of ethnic and racial put downs and “systemic” racism issues that result in some children not achieving their full potential.

Some participants noted that although the proposed Action Plan was largely a Department-driven initiative, they pointed to the need for the whole community to embrace and support the plan.

Another common theme throughout the consultation process was the need for greater details related to the actual implementation of each of the initiatives. In this case, participants encouraged the development of an evaluation plan demonstrating how success would be measured and data collected.

The number of initiatives and the comprehensive nature of the Action Plan were also a subject of interest. While most participants complemented the Department on its attempt to put together a comprehensive plan, some expressed concern that it was too ambitious. Yet others expressed concern that previous initiatives were not already in place, and wanted to know how quickly they could be implemented.

Some specific aspects of the document and consultation highlighted by participants were:

- the consultation process drew many appreciative comments
- the principles listed in the consultation document were supported
- participants stressed the need to support teachers and schools by providing effective professional learning/development opportunities for teachers and schools
- some participants were pleased anti-racism perspectives and actions were expressed in a way that did not focus on “blame”
- many participants expressed the need for continued support for the initiatives proposed

### **Departmental Policy**

The need to renew and revitalize Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth’s policies with respect to diversity and equity in general, and ethnocultural equity specifically, was often cited as being a critical and essential first step. Many advocated that the Department continue to draw on research and promising policies within Manitoba and in other jurisdictions.

Continued efforts to improve and build on practices and initiatives to enhance representation in all Department steering, advisory, and curriculum committees and project teams, was strongly supported. Some called for increased attention to ensure “cross-representation” within target groups, for example, the Department should seek to ensure that women on our committees reflect diverse cultural origins.

Many applauded the Department’s initiative in forming the Cultural Advisory Committee for its input and contributions during the development of Manitoba’s Kindergarten to Grade 12 social studies curriculum framework. It was also suggested that more such committees be structured. Their mandate should include participation and review of all subject areas and stages of curriculum development.

It was clear from the dialogue and feedback received that most participants felt that the Department needed to be more proactive and effective in informing schools, parents, and communities of its policies. While online parent resources are useful, many pointed to the need for print and user-friendly parent and student brochures and packages.

### **Aboriginal, International, Heritage, and Additional Language Education**

Support for language education, including international, heritage, and Aboriginal languages, was a common theme at many of the consultation sessions but particularly with community groups, youth, and multicultural organizations. Participants often expressed support for multilingualism and the need to enhance the choices available to students. Second or additional language education was often expressed as being an essential aspect of demonstrating our recognition of the importance of diversity and the value of the cultural heritages of Canadians.

Generally, participants at all consultation sessions expressed strong support for enhancing support for second language education, especially international (Heritage) and Aboriginal languages. The Department was encouraged to continue its efforts to renew curriculum and to collaborate with other jurisdictions whenever possible.

Many participants called for a second language to be made compulsory for students in Manitoba in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system. At the same time, the majority of participants also supported departmental and school division initiatives to promote and encourage second language learning and encouraged the development of 'campaign' materials for parents and students.

### **Inclusive and Appropriate Curriculum**

Despite improvements and initiatives across Canada and in Manitoba, participants generally felt that greater efforts needed to be made to ensure that provincial curricula, across all subjects, are inclusive, relevant, and appropriate for all students. For some, school curricula throughout Canada and in Manitoba continue to be too Eurocentric in perspective. They stressed the need to move beyond the limited western view of subjects to understand their iteration historically and currently across cultures.

Consistently, participants expressed the need for teachers, curriculum developers, and writers to embrace cultural diversity, and to emphasize respect for the diversity of human perspectives and experiences. They were encouraged to embody intercultural awareness, dialogue, and active respect for human rights.

When informed of recent developments such as the formation of a Cultural Advisory Committee for the development of the new Kindergarten to Grade 12 social studies curriculum in Manitoba, participants responded positively to these initiatives and encouraged the Department to expand efforts in this area.

Participants also made connections between other initiatives that are intended to build empathy and a sense of community and belonging in schools. They advocated for teachers to introduce conversations about human rights, moral education, and character education from a broader, cross-cultural perspective.

Youth seminar participants expressed the need for teachers to take risks and step out of their comfort zone when dealing with important issues related to diversity and human rights. Many students felt that the controversial nature of some human rights concerns, such as gay rights and racism, resulted in many teachers avoiding their discussion or exploration in class. Students, however, expressed the need for informed and meaningful discussions in schools and classrooms.

### **Aboriginal Education and Equity**

Aboriginal educators, youth, and community representatives expressed strong support for all aspects of the proposed Action Plan. They stressed the need for initiatives to address the situation of Aboriginal students because of historical and continuing disadvantage brought about by the special circumstances of Aboriginal peoples. They saw in the Action Plan complementary initiatives and directions, and expressed strong support for anti-racism initiatives and cross-cultural training of teachers.

Other participants saw important linkages between the Action Plan and the needs of Aboriginal communities and learners. Many acknowledged that it is important that students and teachers develop intercultural communication skills and value diversity. They expressed solidarity with other groups in Canadian society that have been marginalized.

### **English as a Second/Additional Language (ESL/EAL)**

The Department's Kindergarten to Senior 4 ESL Program Review was a focus of interest and discussion. In every consultation session, participants expressed support for greater access to appropriate, improved ESL programming in schools. Participants recognized the need to increase capacity to respond more effectively to linguistically diverse students, parents, and communities. All eleven recommendations put forth in the December 2003 *Report on the English as a Second Language Program Review: The Renewal of Kindergarten to Senior 4 ESL Programming in Manitoba* were strongly supported. Some of the specific aspects of the Report that drew most attention included:

- The need to develop provincial ESL policies and programming that reflect current realities of Canada as a multilingual and multicultural nation.
- Support for enhanced funding, the restructuring of the ESL support grant, and the need to extend the number of years students may be eligible for funding.

- The need to enhance support and develop specialized interventions for children and youth from refugee backgrounds with ESL needs and with interrupted schooling. More intensive support for these learners and specialized small, multi-grade classrooms were also advocated.
- The development of ESL curriculum support documents, guidelines for the reception and monitoring of ESL learners, and better assessment tools as a means of providing for more consistent and effective ESL programming. The development of ESL proficiency standards for the assessment of Kindergarten to Grade 12 learners was put forth as one of the ways of enhancing the assessment of ESL learners.
- Many participants expressed support for more research related to ESL and English as a Second Dialect (ESD) issues and programming for Aboriginal learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Some participants supported research into the possibility of English dialects emerging in different communities and their impact upon Aboriginal learners. Others saw a need to work with schools and school divisions in implementing Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA) initiatives to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. Some stressed the need to link ESL initiatives with Aboriginal language education. They stressed that developing proficiency in English and in Aboriginal languages are complementary not contradictory. Generally, support for enhanced ESL/ESD programming for Aboriginal learners, including the possibility of bilingual education initiatives, was advocated.
- Support for the use of the term English as an additional language (EAL) was strong and the distinctions made between ESL, EAL, and ESD were appreciated.
- Collaboration and coordination with Labour and Immigration and adult ESL programming initiatives was seen as a positive and critical step in improving educational outcomes.
- Support for requiring ESL to be part of the pre-service training of new teachers was emphasized. Others stressed the need for all teachers to be aware of learners' needs in acquiring academic language particular to subject areas. This is especially important for inclusive education of ESL and Aboriginal students in order to assist them to master academic language skills beyond conversational English.
- Some participants brought forth the need for more research and a longitudinal study of ESL learners in the province to develop a better understanding of how well programs are serving them. They stressed that such a study needs to be developed in consultation with various stakeholders, including Kindergarten to Grade 12 and adult ESL teachers, teacher associations, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, post-secondary institutions, and ESL teacher education programs.
- Support for enhancing departmental resources to assist the field in developing and implementing ESL programming and local initiatives.

- Support for a sustained sharing and comparison of programming with other jurisdictions.
- Many participants indicated that newcomer students often experience challenges in integrating as a result of racism and ethnic and cultural biases. They expressed support for anti-racism and safe schools initiatives that help to achieve inclusive schools with a healthy climate.
- School divisions with smaller ESL populations welcomed provincial initiatives to develop common and consistent ESL programming approaches but cautioned that there must be sufficient flexibility to allow for different contexts and conditions.
- Many advocated for better planning and coordination of ESL services at the divisional level.

### **Departmental Resources**

The consultation sessions revealed strong support for the development and dissemination of new teacher resources related to anti-racism, inclusive school and classroom strategies, and diversity and equity in education. Many advocated for explicit materials dealing with different forms of discrimination including discrimination based on language ability for all students, not just for those students of marginalized groups.

Parents and community groups pointed to the need for more multilingual materials on the Department's website and in other forms. They argued that it is important for the Department to model good practices.

### **Promotion of Diversity and Equity Policies and Initiatives**

There was a consensus that more needed to be done to inform school administrators, parents, teachers, and students of diversity and equity policies and initiatives. In light of our increasingly multilingual community, participants advocated that multilingual materials and information should be made available. School divisions were encouraged to reach out to diverse parent groups through the utilization of multilingual communication strategies and resources in order to reach immigrants, disadvantaged students, and their parents. Parents of diverse language backgrounds need to be empowered and encouraged to be involved in their children's education.

### **Building School Division and School Capacity**

Initiatives that could encourage or may require school divisions and schools to enhance their capacity to respond to diversity and reduce educational disparities were advocated by some participants. Many noted that only a few school boards in Manitoba have formal policies for multicultural education and/or EAL. Where such policies exist, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth should review and evaluate the implementation of such policies to determine their effectiveness.

Divisional planning was often seen as a way of ensuring consistency across schools and in sharing information. Many advocated that annual divisional plans should clearly contain anti-bias/anti-racist programs.

However, participants also acknowledged that school divisions and schools may vary significantly in terms of their needs, challenges and successes. Therefore, research and data collection about multicultural education programs/components in the curriculum and in classroom/school activities were deemed to be essential. The analysis of the data collected would provide for assessing improvements and for formulating new strategies.

Some participants noted the importance of school division policies and priorities on motivating and facilitating professional learning initiatives. Divisional and school planning processes were seen to be critical aspects of building capacity for change in order to help schools integrate anti-racist/anti-bias elements across the whole school program. School divisions were encouraged to embrace multilingual education and encourage international and heritage language education.

Participants called for more resources to be dedicated to professional learning related to EAL, anti-racism education, and curriculum implementation. School divisions were encouraged to develop and implement professional development programs for safe and inclusive schools initiatives.

Improved communication and partnerships with parent and community groups was discussed. School divisions were encouraged to reach out to students of diverse backgrounds and involve ethnocultural groups in the development of and/or vetting of support packages for school divisions. Others encouraged broader involvement in decision making and professional learning opportunities by inviting ethnocultural groups to participate in workshops that require cross-cultural understanding. Still others advocated meaningful involvement of parents in their children's education.

Participants expressed various ideas about how inclusive school and classroom environments could be created. All agreed that in safe schools, racism or intercultural conflict cannot be ignored and must be dealt with effectively and appropriately. Many called for programming that builds empathy and compassion for others as well as a sense of belonging. They stated that such initiatives should be part of safe school programming. Others supported character and moral education initiatives. Similarly, many participants expressed that it was important for teachers and school personnel to have empathy and compassion for students and families from diverse backgrounds or those facing poverty and other challenges in their lives.

Many participants advocated for greater efforts to increase the representation within school divisions' administrative and leadership teams. Often, participants noted that while individual school communities may be diverse and embrace diversity and equity initiatives, diversity may not be represented at the divisional level.

Other frequently cited areas of concern or need were:

- documenting individual schools that have positive results or have implemented promising practices
- enhancing divisional supports for interventions and efforts to reduce education disparities
- the need to develop capacity to address diversity and equity issues in schools and communities. Some schools and communities embrace diversity but have difficulty putting in place programs and concrete initiatives to address it
- specific divisional and/or school events may be helpful in raising awareness of diversity and building community harmony

### **Community and Parental Partnerships in Education**

There was great interest expressed in enhancing parental and community partnerships. Participants stressed the need for community school approaches that integrate school, community and inter-agency supports and resources. They stated that an intersectoral approach is needed with ongoing communication, planning, and coordination among schools, communities, and other agencies involved.

Other suggestions concerning community and parental partnerships included:

- Invite parents, learners, and diverse community representatives to offer perspectives on EAL, multilingualism, multiculturalism, anti-racism education, human rights education, and cross-cultural communication to assist in professional development.
- Encourage school divisions to develop multilingual outreach strategies and resources to assist recent immigrant students and their parents.

### **Immigration and Responding to the Needs of Newcomers**

Some participants noted that while government policy over the last decade has been to increase immigration and that immigration levels have recently begun to rise, school divisions have not necessarily attended to the implications for their schools and systems. In addition, EAL programming supports and divisional practices have tended to evolve on an ad hoc or reactive basis. Some participants indicated that it was important for school divisions to dialogue with staff and the community to create a well articulated position on what constitutes appropriate education for new immigrant students.

Assistance for enhanced supports from other government departments and agencies for newcomer families and youth was frequently expressed. Participants specifically advocated increased support for:

- families and adult learners
- assessment and pre-screening for educational needs in the initial immigration process
- enhanced interpretive services for educational and other essential needs

### **Building a More Inclusive Teacher Workforce/Employment Equity in Education**

The need to build a more inclusive and representative teacher force was a common theme at virtually every consultation session. While some acknowledged that there were increased numbers of educators of diverse backgrounds working as teachers and in other related roles, most participants expressed the view that teachers and administrators do not reflect the rich diversity of peoples and cultures that are present in our communities. While perspectives differed on what was needed to address the situation, generally, participants supported enhanced efforts in this area. Some participants called for the extension of government employment equity policies to school boards and funded independent schools, and an affirmative action plan and policy that prepares cultural minorities for success in the workplace when hired.

Participants expressed strong support for the development of a provincial strategy to increase representation in all the faculties of education from under-represented groups. They urged the Department to work with faculties of education to develop a common strategy to increase diversity and representation in the faculties by attracting teacher candidates of Aboriginal and diverse cultural origins. Active recruitment of teacher candidates of diverse backgrounds was often advocated.

Participants also highlighted the need to ensure that all teacher candidates have a good understanding of diversity and equity initiatives, inclusive curriculum, and effective anti-racist teaching strategies. Others highlighted the importance of teachers developing cross-cultural competencies to enhance their ability to communicate and work with students and parents of diverse origins.

While most participants recognized that the faculties of education in the province offer some courses related to cross-cultural education, Aboriginal education, or perhaps even anti-racism education, these courses are usually optional or, if required, are too superficial. Many argued for mandatory courses on diversity and equity as well as efforts to infuse all the required courses with diversity and equity content. Some suggested that these courses be required for certification in Manitoba or that school divisions make them a requirement for employment.

Other participants drew parallels with the need to build more welcoming school climates. They argued that faculties of education need to provide a positive, supportive environment for those who are recruited from under-represented groups for effective participation and success in the teaching profession.

The certification and training of internationally trained teachers was another major area of concern. The development of specific programs targeted to help international teacher candidates meet certification requirements was strongly supported. In addition, some called for more effective admission policies, processes, and screening tools to identify international and English as an additional language teacher candidates who may need to improve their English communication skills. In addition, they advocated the development of specialized courses for such teacher candidates to enhance their employability and their ability to communicate with students, colleagues, and parents. Some suggested that Education courses be “benchmarked” so that international students have a better understanding of the language demands of these courses. Others applauded the recent pilot initiatives developed by Manitoba Labour and Immigration for certified internationally trained teachers, and suggested that these initiatives be used as a model for other initiatives.

Many expressed the need for more research related to diversity in the teaching profession. Some suggested that the Department and universities should undertake or sponsor participatory action research in targeted communities to understand the obstacles and resistances to members entering the teaching profession. Lastly, they also stated that it is important to give visibility to existing teachers from these communities, to serve as models and mentors for prospective and interning students.

## **KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12 ACTION PLAN FOR ETHNOCULTURAL EQUITY 2006–2008**

The themes that emerged during the equity and diversity consultations were consistent with many aspects of the discussion paper and the proposed actions. Participants amplified the need for specific actions and refined or pointed to important implementation issues rather than suggesting alternative actions. What came through most clearly was the urgent need to move beyond discussion and to actual action and implementation of the proposed initiatives.

*Belonging, Learning, and Growing: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity (2006–2008)*, therefore, reflects many aspects of the draft Action Plan and the changes that were informed by the consultations and the feedback received.

### **Building Capacity to Respond to the Needs of Diverse Learners**

- **Implement the Kindergarten to Senior 4 ESL Program Review:** The Department is committed to the full implementation of the Kindergarten to Senior 4 ESL Action Plan released in May of 2005. The implementation of several initiatives has begun and includes EAL curriculum development, piloting of the first of a series of Senior Years EAL courses, and the restructuring of the EAL Support Grant and funding enhancements for 2006-2007.
- **Enhance divisional and school planning to build safe and inclusive schools:** A support package and workshop series will be developed and offered, to assist annual divisional and school planning.
- **Integrate anti-racism/anti-bias elements in safe schools initiatives:** A support package on developing intercultural codes of conduct, other safe schools practices, and other resources will be developed.
- **Explore the possibilities for the integration of diversity and equity elements into departmental indicators initiative:** Manitoba will develop educational indicators and data collection strategies that will enable the charting of our progress in reducing educational disparities and meeting the needs of diverse learners.

### **Engaging Parents, Students, and Educators**

- **Launch an informational campaign on diversity and equity:** An informational campaign will be developed to raise the awareness of parents, students, and educators of the need and possibilities for creating a more inclusive and equitable school system.

- **Encourage the learning of additional languages:** A promotional campaign will be developed to ensure that parents, students, and educators are aware of the research on benefits of second language learning, the value of multilingualism, and the opportunities available in Manitoba.

### **Resources for Building Inclusive Schools and Classrooms**

- **Develop/renew curriculum for Aboriginal and International languages:** Through participation in the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol new curriculum frameworks were developed for International languages. Manitoba will continue to work collaboratively with other provinces and partners to develop new curricula and support materials for Aboriginal and International languages.
- **Increase diversity and equity content on the Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth website:** The Internet plays an important communication role in our educational system and society. The Department will develop strategies to ensure that its website content visibly and meaningfully reflects diversity, and will launch a new website to provide educators and students with resources to promote diversity, intercultural, and anti-racism education.
- **Provide support documents on diversity and equity in the classroom for compulsory curricula and strategic areas:** Manitoba-specific support materials and other resources will be developed to help teachers and schools address the needs of diverse learners in all subject areas.

### **Policy Renewal and New Guidelines**

- **Renew the Multicultural Education Policy:** Manitoba will renew provincial policies on diversity and equity in education through a consultative and collaborative process. A new policy statement will be developed to meet our current and future needs and guide departmental and educational initiatives.
- **Develop a position statement and funding guidelines to promote multilingual education:** A departmental position statement and funding guidelines will be developed that affirms the value of multilingual education for all students and continues our support for Aboriginal, French, and International languages.
- **Renew guidelines to ensure equitable representation on departmental teams and committees:** Manitoba has taken important steps to make the curriculum development process more inclusive through such mechanisms as the Cultural Advisory Committee that guided the development of the new Social Studies curriculum. The Department will make development teams and other committees more reflective of Manitoba's diversity by implementing practices and strategies that ensure continuous improvement.

- **Establish a project coordination team:** An intra-departmental team will be established to coordinate, manage, and evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan.

### **Enhancing Workforce Diversity**

- **Build a more diverse departmental staff:** Manitoba's recently released Diversity and Employment Equity Policy/Plan provides a basis for increasing diversity in the Department and across government. The Department will implement the new policy and monitor its progress in achieving the targets set.
- **Enhance the inclusion of elements related to Aboriginal and diversity education in Departmental staff professional development plans:** On an annual basis the Department will provide professional learning opportunities for all staff that address issues of equity and diversity.
- **Develop a common strategy to increase diversity in teacher education programs:** The Department will work with faculties of education to develop a provincial strategy to increase the presence of under-represented groups in the faculties of education.
- **Facilitate the evaluation and certification of teachers with credentials from other countries:** Through consultations with Manitoba Labour and Immigration (MLIM) and the Teacher Education and Certification Committee, new certification requirements for internationally trained teachers were developed and implemented in July 2005. Other initiatives undertaken include collaborating with MLIM and the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, in the January 2006 launching of a pilot Internationally Educated Teacher Program (IET), and working with the University of Winnipeg to improve evaluation and counselling of internationally educated teachers. The Department will monitor developments and seek other opportunities to remove barriers.
- **Use departmental and government internship programs to promote education as a career:** The Departments of Education, Citizenship and Youth and Advanced Education and Training will use existing government internship programs and youth initiatives to promote education as a career for Aboriginal and culturally diverse youth.
- **Develop professional learning series on inclusive schools and teaching for teachers and administrators:** The Department will collaborate with community organizations and other educational partners to develop resources and enhance professional learning opportunities related to diversity and equity in Manitoba.

## REFERENCES

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Statistics Canada website: <<http://www.statcan.ca>>.

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