



While the majority of Canadians are likely to embrace human diversity, inclusion, human rights, equality, and sustainable development as fundamental social and personal values, there are ongoing challenges to achieving a more inclusive, just, and equitable society. Racism, religious intolerance, homophobia, gender-based violence, resistance to the inclusion of persons with differing abilities, and other forms of discrimination are still all too evident in our communities and schools. The lasting effects of discrimination on our students are powerful and are often directly related to behaviour problems, anti-social behaviour, violence, disengagement from the classroom and school, lower achievement, and higher dropout rates.

The educational literature and contemporary research provide strong evidence that chronic poverty has serious effects on the educational outcomes and life chances of many students. The effects of poverty challenge all groups, but particularly FNMI peoples, new Canadians, and women. Contemporary Canadian educational research has shown that the short-term and long-term effects of poverty on students are enormous and need to be addressed.

To address these challenges, a new attitude and vision has emerged in Manitoba and throughout Canada that changes how we view diversity in the classroom. Diversity is no longer seen as an obstacle or a problem but as a strength and source of hope for the future. Respect and appreciation for diversity has become in many ways and for most Canadians the keystone that unites Canada and its people and is often put forward as an ideal for the world as a whole.



As an increasingly diverse province, it is important that we work to find solutions to the new and continuing challenges and problems posed by racism and inequity. We need to acknowledge and respond positively and effectively to our increasingly diverse and complex society and its needs. This requires that we recognize that diversity is not a peripheral, Winnipeg, inner-city, or urban concern, but one that is at the very core of our educational system.

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