



Over the last several decades, Manitoba has become much richer in terms of its diversity and the deeper understanding among Manitobans of the importance of social justice and equity in our province, nation, and world.

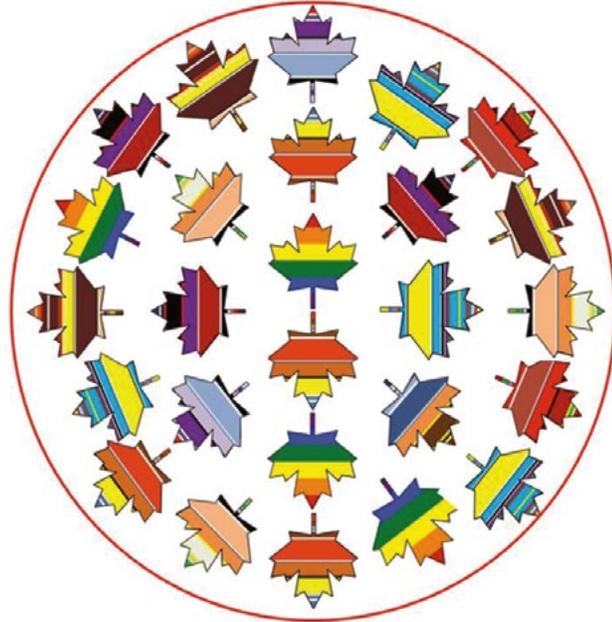
Manitoba in particular has seen many changes as a result of the growth of Indigenous communities. It has also seen recent success in attracting increasing numbers of new Canadians from around the world, reflecting a rich mix of religions, languages, and cultures. There have been significant changes concerning human rights and equality at the provincial, national, and international levels. The last decades have been some of the most difficult because of the extent of war and conflict throughout the world, and because of the continued challenge of protecting the rights of civilians. Many of Manitoba's new citizens from other continents have been personally and collectively affected by war and conflict. The development of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg is a testimony to our growing understanding of how human rights issues transcend borders.

These developments in Manitoba, Canada, and in our contemporary world have raised our awareness of human interdependence and the importance of active and meaningful participation as citizens at the local, national, and global levels. This document provides a vision of how our education system can prepare students to meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse society and create local and international communities characterized by diversity, justice, and equity. Equally important, it provides a direction for the renewal of Manitoba Education and Training's efforts to challenge inequity and work towards an educational system that provides an appropriate, engaging, and meaningful educational experience that welcomes all learners.

A Land of Diverse Peoples

Historically, the land that is now Manitoba was a unique tapestry of Indigenous peoples. Woven into this tapestry were immigrants who came to this land over the past several centuries from around the world. Many of these immigrants were seeking freedom from the ravages of natural disasters or from religious, political, and economic oppression and war. Human diversity has been a constant and ever-evolving characteristic of Manitoba's peoples.

The last few decades have seen a rather dramatic change in the cultural, linguistic, and religious composition of Canada's and Manitoba's peoples. The change has resulted from several factors, including population growth among FNMI peoples and altered patterns of immigration, which are both significant for Manitoba.



According to the 2007 publication *Aboriginal Demography – Population, Household and Family Projections*

2001–2026, Manitoba's and Canada's Indigenous populations are "growing almost twice as fast as the Canadian population and this trend is expected to continue over the next two decades" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, p. 5). The growth in the Indigenous population will be especially important to the western provinces and Manitoba specifically. By 2026, Manitoba's Indigenous population is expected to grow by 53% (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, p. 6). This growth will affect many cities, as "Urban and on-reserve locations are also expected to experience high levels of Aboriginal population growth" (Steffler, p. 20). The growth in the Indigenous population is especially important for Winnipeg, where Indigenous peoples currently account for more than 10% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2013). It is critically important to consider the changing nature of the composition of Canada today and in the near future.

The study *Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population 2006–2031* by Statistics Canada indicates that Manitoba's and Canada's diversity will only continue to grow, especially in terms of the percentage of citizens of visible minority origins, religious affiliation, and linguistic origins. A few selected highlights of the projections for 2031 from the report follow (Statistics Canada, 2010, p. 1).

The composition of Manitoba's families has also changed dramatically. While historically the majority of families were composed of a household with two parents, this is no longer true. Today's families are diverse and include blended families, families with same-sex parents, single-parent families, multi-generational and extended families, and childless families. The increasing diversity of families is documented in the Statistics Canada 2007 report *Family Portrait: Continuity and Change in Canadian Families and Households in 2006, 2006 Census*. The 2006 census was the first time the census counted same-sex married couples as a result of the legalization of same-sex marriages in all of Canada in July 2005. In total, the census enumerated 45,345 same-sex couples, of which 7,465, or 16.5%, were married couples. In addition, over half (53.7%) of same-sex married spouses were men in 2006, compared with 46.3% who were women. About 9.0% of persons in same-sex couples had children aged 24 years and under living in the home in 2006. This was more common for females (16.3%) than for males (2.9%) in same-sex couples (Milan et al.).

The combined and cumulative effects of rapidly growing and much more youthful Aboriginal, immigrant, and visible minority populations have had and will increasingly have a significant impact on the K-12 educational system in Manitoba, but especially Winnipeg. Already in 2001, approximately 32% of children aged 0-5 years of age were of Indigenous and visible minority origins (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006, p. 10). Based on the projections about the rapid growth of Manitoba's Aboriginal and visible minority youth populations, it is conceivable that within less than a decade the percentage of Indigenous and visible minority students in Winnipeg's schools will approach or exceed 50%.

Despite the rich human diversity that is Manitoba and Canada, there have been rips and stains in our social fabric that were left by oppression, violence, and inequities in our society and our history of social injustice. These include but are not limited to

- effects of colonialism and residential schools on Canada's diverse Indigenous (FNMI) peoples
- unequal treatment of women before and under the law
- the struggle of francophone Canadians for cultural and linguistic survival
- the impact of racist immigration and other policies that limited the freedoms and rights of many Canadians
- the internment of ordinary Canadians as "enemy aliens" during the First and Second World Wars
- the struggle for inclusion, respect, and just treatment among various equity-seeking groups, including Canadians of differing abilities and diverse sexual orientations

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