

Intercultural Awareness



Introduction

“We believe that Ontario’s diversity can be its greatest asset. To realize the promise of our diversity, we must respect and value the full range of our differences. Providing a high-quality education for all is a key means of fostering social cohesion, based on an inclusive society where diversity is affirmed within a framework of common values that promote the well-being of all citizens.” *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, 2009.* (p. 5)

Thanks to our rich history, we have been encircled by a multitude of languages and cultures from First Nations, Métis and Inuit as well as from across the globe. Because Canada is a pluralistic society, many of us are fortunate enough to live in multicultural communities which open doors for us to create meaningful cross-cultural relationships. Our strength is in our diversity and the opportunities this provides for our personal growth; a lot of our students are learning French as a third or fourth language. Canada’s designation as a bilingual country is also the result of our rich history. As stated in *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Grades 4-8; Extended French, Grades 4-8; French Immersion, Grades 1-8, (revised) 2013* and *The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, Grades 9-12, (revised) 2014*, hereafter referred to as the Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula, the French language is “an integral part of the Canadian identity”. (p. 7)

Please note: this module includes suggested Internet resources. Teachers must review their Board’s policies for acceptable use of Internet and ICT as well as preview all Internet resources before sharing them with their students.

Why is Intercultural Awareness Important?

Which of the concepts listed below speak most directly to you as an educator of language and culture? Might or should any of these be priorities for your students?

- Respect and understanding of others
- Intercultural communicative competence – A global perspective
- Valuing of languages and cultures
- Better understanding of our students and their families
- An appreciation of the authentic place of French in the global village
- Helping prepare our students for their interactions in the global village
- Fostering improved communication and collaboration skills amongst our students and ourselves
- Reflecting on our values concerning intercultural awareness will help shape our mindset as we develop lessons and search for authentic materials to provide multiple opportunities to support student growth in this area.

Languages and cultures are deeply interconnected. Fluency in French allows our students to become social actors on a global stage. Authentic conversations can lead to situations where students “learn about other ways of thinking, other ways of doing things, and

other ways of living,” *The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula for elementary and secondary* (p. 7) By providing intentional learning opportunities to develop communicative intercultural competence, we want to help our students become confident and competent in a variety of cultural settings and interactions.

Milton Bennett, in his article entitled “*Becoming Interculturally Competent*”, describes a sequence of development of intercultural awareness. He details this growth as movement from acceptance (*savoir*) - awareness and information concerning another’s culture -, to adaptation (*savoir apprendre*) - observing and learning about other cultures -, to integration (*savoir être*) - being able to move beyond a personal perspective to view others non-judgmentally -, to an intercultural world view (*savoir faire*) - being able to interact proficiently. This wider understanding can help our students become more flexible in their thinking, more open-minded, more culturally aware and better prepared for future opportunities. (pgs. 68-74)

Small “c” Culture

Our concentric circles of influence move from our families to our schools, our communities, and our nation and to nations around the world. We must start with an understanding of our own culture. Small “c” culture refers to our individual family traditions and experiences. What part of the world does our family come from? How have those origins influenced our family dynamics, traditions, cuisine, celebrations, language, and possible religious contexts? What do we take pride in as a culture? What distinguishes us from other cultures? These considerations can lead us to a sense of our personal cultural world – *mon identité culturelle*. Sentence starters – *les déclencheurs* – can help support student reflections and spontaneous conversations.



- Pendant les vacances, on aime faire _____ en famille.
- Chez nous, on respecte _____ alors, on _____.
- On aime manger _____.
- Dans ma famille, on aime _____ alors, j’ai dessiné _____.
- J’aime beaucoup jouer _____.
- Ensemble, nous _____.
- Un symbole de ma culture est _____.
- Les choses importantes dans ma culture sont _____.

Reflection may lead students to take pride in who they are. Ask students to reflect on their name: ***Au sujet de mon nom.***

Considère ton nom, soit ton prénom, soit ton nom de famille ou les deux.

- Qui a choisi ton nom?
- Est-ce que tu es nommé d’après quelqu’un/quelqu’une? Pour quelle raison?
- Est-ce que ton nom a une signification spéciale? Laquelle?
- Est-ce que ton nom a un lien historique?
- Comment te sens-tu au sujet de ton nom?

Students could be asked to share their thoughts and responses to these questions with their classmates in a think-pair-share session.

Ask students to consider which three important things define who they are. ***Les trois choses dans ma vie qui sont les plus importantes sont ...*** Students could share their thoughts with an elbow partner. The class could sort their responses into categories: *ma famille, mes amis/mes amies, ma communauté, les sports, les passe-temps*, or other appropriate categories. An anchor chart could be created to provide vocabulary support for future work and conversations.

Large “C” Culture

Large “C” Culture reflects a society at large, through its architecture, fine arts, dance, music, and literature.

Nous sommes canadiens/canadiennes!

How do we define our Canadian culture? Knowledge of our past helps us understand the foundations of our present situation. For intermediate and secondary students, ask them to make cross-curricular connections to their historical knowledge. **Comment est-ce que nos expériences historiques font partie de notre culture canadienne?** Students could respond orally after generating a list or work from a teacher-generated list, which may include **la traite de fourrures, les voyageurs, le contact avec les Autochtones, l’influence de l’église catholique, la construction du chemin de fer transcontinental, l’immigration, les bûcherons, la chasse au bison, la Première Guerre mondiale ou la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.** Video clips in French from [Historica Canada](#) and the [National Film Board](#) could be viewed to build background knowledge and spark conversations. [La valse du maître](#) is a classic media resource that blends a traditional French Canadian song with cartoon and video footage of log drivers moving felled lumber down Canadian rivers.

Students might choose a topic of interest and co-create Venn diagrams to help sort their information and visually organize connections from the past – **le passé** - to their current world – **le présent**. Prompts – **les déclencheurs** – could scaffold the language learning and build language supports which may be necessary for some students, as detailed in their Individual Education Plan. These prompts are often good for all students, as they provide differentiated support to help build fluency, confidence and correct French language structures.

- Dans mon opinion, ...
- Je pense que ...
- Nous remarquons des liens entre ... et
- Notre présent est influencé par ...
- C’est possible que notre respect pour la nature ait commencé avec ...
- Notre culture canadienne a évolué des ...

Using the Historica Canada model of “Heritage Minutes”, students could create their own “Minute de la Patrimoine” to highlight another aspect of Canadian culture, either digitally recorded or dramatically performed.



On a more current note, ask students to consider the role of coffee in our culture. Students could view the following commercial: [Tim Horton’s® – ça c’est la culture canadienne!](#) and conduct surveys to determine how much money is spent at Tim Horton’s by staff, students and parents. Perhaps store managers could be interviewed en français to learn about client volume, costs and profits, as well as community support provided by their company.

After a second viewing of [Tim Horton’s® – ça c’est la culture canadienne!](#), pose the question – **Est-ce que c’est vrai?** Students could share their opinions using a value line strategy. They could be asked to stand and place themselves on the line in relation to their opinion – **absolument at one end of the line, pas du tout at the other extremity, au milieu** in the middle of the line for those who can see both sides equally, and the rest of the students could negotiate their place into the remaining positions to create one line. To facilitate spontaneous conversations, **glissez la ligne** - ask the right half of the line to take three steps forward, turn 180 degrees to face the left hand side of the line, and slide their line all the way to the left, creating talk partners. Ligne A could begin defending their position. Upon a pre-determined signal from the teacher, Ligne B could defend their position. Then three students at the left end of Ligne B could walk around to the opposite end of Ligne B and all others in that line could slide 3 spaces to the left in order to create new talk partners and provide opportunities to repeat or engage in further conversations.

Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire d'être canadien? Older students might brainstorm answers to that question. After sharing ideas, they could view the YouTube video [Je suis canadien](#). Students could be asked to make connections between their responses and the thoughts of the spoken word artist. Using a T-chart graphic organizer, students could detail **les similarités et les différences**. The final image states **“Si la plupart des Canadiens au Canada sont des immigrants, et la plupart des immigrants au Canada sont des Canadiens ... les immigrants ne sont pas différents de toi et moi.”** Students might respond to this statement by tracing their family heritage as First Nation, Métis or Inuit or as immigrants to Canada. **Quand est-ce que ta famille est arrivée au Canada? D'où venait ta famille originalement? Pourquoi ta famille a choisi le Canada comme destination? Comment est-ce que la culture canadienne reflète les valeurs de ta famille?** Class sharing in a community circle could build respect for diversity within the classroom as well as French speaking and listening skills.

La francophonie autour du monde

“Culture is significant because as we work with others it both enables us and impedes us in our ability to understand and work effectively together.” [Centre for Intercultural Learning](#).

According to [The International Organization of La Francophonie](#), French an official language of 32 of the 57 its member states. Furthermore, approximately 220 million people speak French across five continents. This global community represents numerous diverse cultures, many with particular social norms. Specific geographic areas of study within la Francophonie have been identified for each grade level in [The Revised 2013-2014 FSL Curricula for elementary](#) and [secondary](#). Knowledge of various family structures, social roles, courtesies, manners and traditions for each area could be gained at the *savoir* and *savoir apprendre* learning levels of intercultural competence.

This information may help students avoid being what Milton Bennett, the Director of Intercultural Development Research Institute in Oregon, calls “fluent fools” - those behaving in inappropriate ways due to lack of intercultural awareness who risk offending members of another culture. Humour allows us to consider these challenges in a light-hearted manner.

[Les Gags Juste pour rire](#), provide many appropriate digital comedy sketches that could inspire discussions about intercultural awareness. [Mr. Bean](#) (<http://www.youtube.com/user/justepourrire>) creates a comical representation of this dilemma in a restaurant in France. Francophone film festivals may also provide a variety of authentic materials to further build cultural knowledge amongst our students.

Our language classes need to become venues for the development of intercultural competencies which will enable our students to participate fluently on the global stage - both linguistically and culturally.

Please note: teachers must review their Board's policies for acceptable use of Internet and ICT as well as preview all Internet resources before sharing them with their students.



Resources

Arabski, J. and A Wojtaszek , eds. (2011). Aspects of Culture in Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Learning. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.

Atlantic Film Festival – Cinéma en français

www.atlanticfilm.com/media/archive/33rd-atlantic-film-festival-announces-cin%C3%A9ma-en-fran%C3%A7ais-svp-sept-13-16-halifax

Bennett, Milton J. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. Newton, MA: Bentley College, 2002

http://www.wholecommunities.org/pdf/privilege/4_Becominginterculturallycompe_Bennett.pdf

Bryam, Michael (2011). University of Durham, Great Britain. Intercultural Competence and Foreign Language Teaching

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXhfi16CGOA#>

Ciné franco – Festival International du Film Francophone

<http://2014.cinefranco.com>

DiverCiné Film Festival: World Cinema From la Francophonie

<http://www.divercine.com>

Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne

<http://www.fesfo.ca/accueil.html>

Festival des films du monde

<http://www.ffm-montreal.org/en/press-releases/22-mwff-is-also-the-francophone-festival-par-excellence.html>

Juste pour rire

www.hahaha.com/fr

Lussier, Denise (2011). “Language, Thought and Culture: Links to Intercultural Competence,” Canadian and International Education/Éducation canadienne et internationale: Vol. 40: Iss. 2, Article 4

<http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=cie-eci>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2009). Ontario Government Equity and Inclusive School Policy

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core, Grades 4–8; Extended, Grades 4–8; Immersion, Grades 1–8, (revised)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/fsl.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education, The Ontario Curriculum: French as a Second Language: Core French, Extended French and French Immersion, Grades 9-12, (revised) 2014

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/fsl.html>

Ostiguy, Brigitte (2008). Parlure et parlotte québécoise illustrées. Québec: Éditions Chien rouge