

## ACTIVITY TEN: DIVERSE CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

### Objectives:

- To know the cultural groups in Canada
- To realize the cultural experience of 'becoming Canadian'
- To appreciate social and cultural diversity

### Materials:

- Text, pp. XXX
- Table Seven: Visible Minorities in Vancouver, B.C., Metropolitan Area
- Reading Three: Cultural Experiences

### Procedures:

1. Make three lists on the blackboard: the Founding Peoples, the Ethnic Minorities and the Native Peoples. Discuss Canadians who make up each group and where they live. Make a similar listing of Americans.
2. Hand out to students Reading Three: Cultural Experiences. Compare accounts in terms of experiences, personal feelings, and the cultural point of view. Identify who the individual(s) might be in each account.
3. With two or more groups, have the class debate the pros and cons of a culturally diverse nation. As a follow-up, have a discussion or written assignment on policies which would favor or eliminate cultural diversity.

### Notes for Teaching:

The intent of the activity is to build in students an appreciation for different cultural experiences and a culturally diverse country.

The readings by Canadian writers portray some of the experiences of ethnic groups during a time of settlement and growth. Account One is from Pierre Berton's book, *THE SMUG MINORITY*. It describes the author's summer work experiences in a mining community during the 1930s. Account Two, taken from John Marlyn's novel, *UNDER THE RIBS OF DEATH*, is about a Hungarian boy's experiences growing up in Winnipeg. Account Three, a proud and bitter recollection of growing up in the Canadian prairies, is taken from *HALFBREED*, by Maria Campbell.

The debate and follow-up activities highlight issues associated with culturally diverse countries. The following are often viewed as advantages:

1. Creates a more interesting group of people and cultural environment, e.g. food, architecture, art and music.
2. Widens viewpoints and tolerance.

3. Maintains peoples' ties with cultural origins.

The following are often viewed as disadvantages:

1. Creates cultural conflict.
2. Often leads to political instability.
3. High costs are often required to maintain cultural identity. For example, the cost of printing or advertising commercial products in more than one language.

The follow-up assignment is intended to stimulate class discussion regarding aspects of society considered important by an individual. Consequently, the advantages and disadvantages may be viewed differently. Attention should be drawn to the personal viewpoints in the readings, thereby making possible a deeper and more critical look.

### **READING THREE: CULTURAL EXPERIENCES**

#### **Account One**

Yet for me, in my late teens, life in this mining camp was immeasurably easier than it was for the others. There were men here in their sixties who had lived this way all their lives. There were men in their prime with wives and children to support—families they did not see for half of every year. There were all kinds of men here and few who were really stupid. I worked with immigrants from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, as well as with Canadians. Most were intelligent and a great many were extremely sharp and able. All were industrious. Each had displayed enough courage and independence to somehow make his way several thousand miles to the one corner of North America where a job of sorts was comparatively easy to get. But all had one thing in common: according to my observation, none had been educated up to his ability.

**Pierre Berton, THE SMUG MINORITY, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968, pp. 49-50.**

#### **Account Two**

"The English," he whispered. "Pa, the only people who count are the English. Their fathers got all the best jobs. They're the only ones nobody ever calls foreigners. Nobody ever makes fun of their names or calls them, 'Baloney-eaters,' or laughs at the way they dress or talk." "Nobody," he concluded bitterly, "cause when you're English it's the same as being Canadian."

**John Marlyn, UNDER THE RIBS OF DEATH, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964, p. 24.**

#### **Account Three**

We halfbreeds always played by ourselves unless there was rugby or a ball game, when we played against the whites. It was the same in class; we stayed in two separate groups. Lunch hours were really rough when we started school because we had not realized, until then, the difference in our diets. They had white or brown bread, boiled eggs, apples, cakes, cookies, and jars of milk. We were lucky to have these even at Christmas. We took bannock for lunch, spread with lard and filled with wild meat, and if there was no meat we had cold potatoes and salt and pepper, or else whole roasted gophers with sage dressing. No apples or fruit, but if we were lucky there was a jam sandwich for dessert. The first few days the whites were speechless when they saw Alex's children with gophers and the rest of us trading a sandwich, a leg, or dressing. They would tease and call, "Gophers, gophers, Road Allowance people eat gophers." We fought back of course but we were terribly hurt and above all ashamed.

**Maria Campbell, HALFBREED, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973, pp. 46-47.**