


# The Power of Diversity: Transformation in the Encounter with the Other

A photograph of a stack of smooth, light-colored stones. The stones are arranged in a way that they form a semi-circular arch. The stones are of various shades of white, grey, and light brown. One stone at the top of the arch is a distinct reddish-brown color. The background is a clear blue sky and a calm blue ocean.

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# Outline

1. Culture, Individuals and Diversity
2. Church-intercultural community
3. Intercultural competence and dialogue
4. Empathy
5. Diversity and Belonging in the Canadian Context
6. Compassion Circle



# Context

- **Interconnected global world**
- **The fragmentation of communities**
  - Atomization of individuals
  - Polarization due to social media chambers.
  - Fragmentation of religious communities
  - Loneliness and mental health issues



# Culture and the Individual

Culture related to personal identity

- Ex. People who lived in multiple cultures: hybrid identity

Cultural differences-  
different worldviews-  
how do we define  
differences?

- Ex. Individualism vs. collectivism

**Intercultural  
Competence:**

- Understanding the different culture-empathy
- Loosening the inflexible worldview of one's own culture-transformation



Be no stranger, see no stranger

*“when you can look into the eyes of a stranger and see a sister or a brother, then it is dawn; until then, it is still night.”*

*(A. Gittins)*

*“Deep listening is an act of surrender. We risk being changed by what we hear.”*

*(Valarie Kaur)*



# Role of the Church

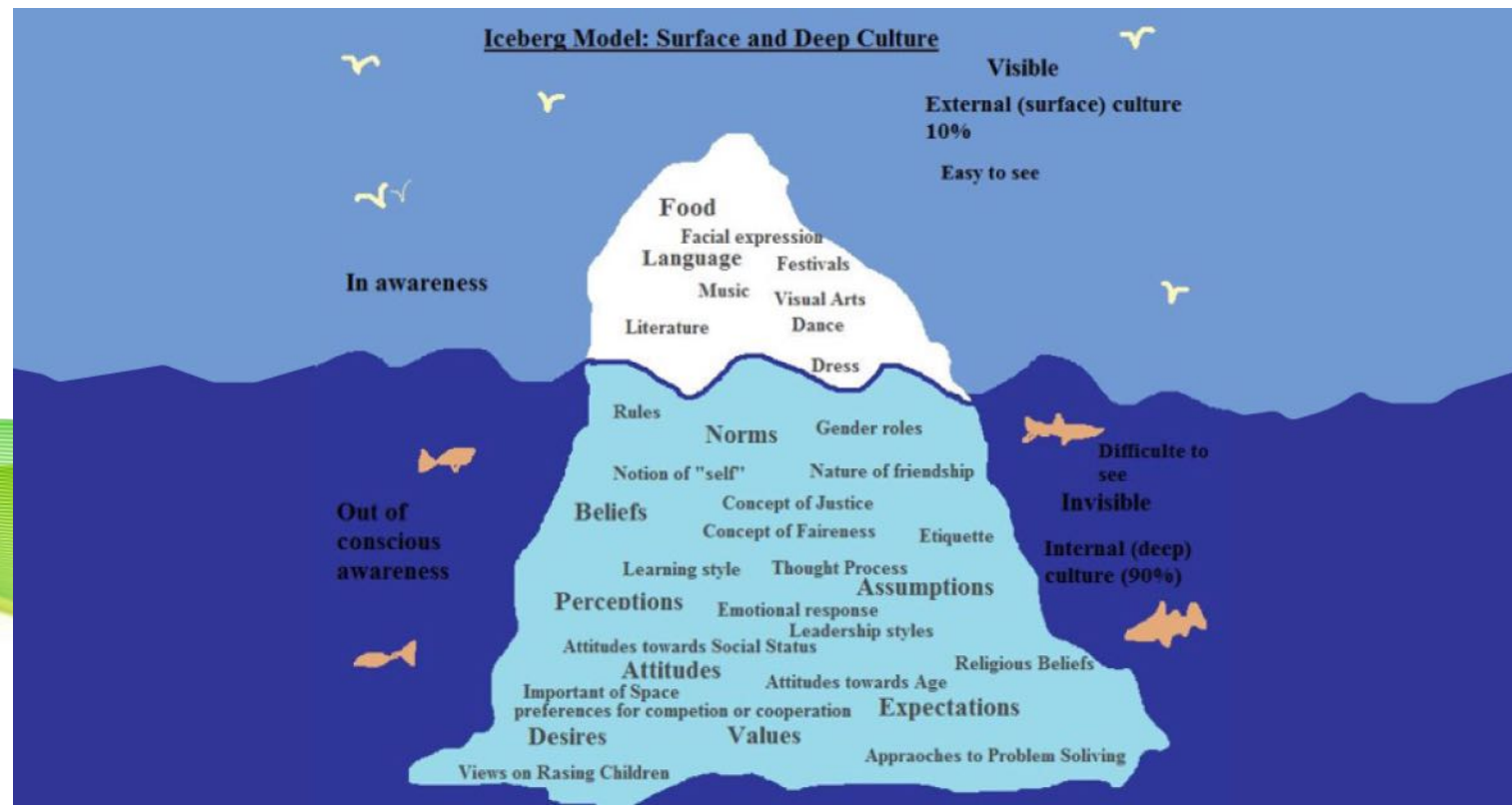
- Major player in creating a sense of belonging and community, but it can also create in-group out-group dynamics
- Microcosm and macrocosm-creation is an unfolding of worlds
- Assimilationist model vs.
- Diplomacy, compromise, dialogue, and a common vision (Gittins, 2020)
- **Intercultural community as Home**
  1. Common vision
  2. Commitment to inclusion and the thriving of all members
  3. Building processes of feedback and naming issues
  4. Leadership for addressing and mending problems
  5. Compassion



# Intercultural competence

The experience of difference-threat to the stability of worldview=>increased awareness and understanding

- opportunity for identity expansion.





# Intercultural Competence (John Kirby; Milton Bennett)

**1. Denial**-stereotyping-dominant groups, separation- racism

DO: Increase access to other cultures or groups

**2. Defense:** affective responses to difference-threat, us vs. them mentality, superiority

DO: Commonalities of shared needs and goals

**3. Minimization**-acceptance of superficial difference and focus on similarity as human beings-the privileged norm is the universal

DO: Develop self-awareness





# Intercultural Competence (John Kirby; Milton Bennett)

**4. Acceptance-beliefs and values are shaped by different cultures with valid perspectives**

**Do: curiosity, learning about other cultures**

**5. Adaptation-empathizing with other perspectives**

**Do: intercultural dialogue, teamwork, expanding consciousness**

**6. Integration incorporate the values, beliefs, perspectives, and behaviors of other cultures in appropriate and authentic ways.**

**Do: living a multicultural identity, inclusive mindset**



# Intercultural Dialogue

## **Discussion vs. Dialogue**

“In a discussion, different views are presented and defended. In dialogue, different views are presented as a means toward discovering a new view. In a discussion, decisions are made. In a dialogue, complex issues are explored.” (Senge, 2006, p. 229)

1. Keeping our assumptions aware and open
2. Active listening and curiosity
3. Importance of good facilitation for difficult topics





# Empathy

- Besides respecting difference, it implies a readiness to give up temporarily one's own worldview in order to imaginatively participate in the other's. (Kirby, 2018, p. 101)
- Means to increase empathy:
  - Self-awareness
  - Reading books
  - Films about different cultures
  - Traveling
  - Working together
  - Sharing stories





# Diversity and conflict

Expression of differences from a norm  
Defining by differentiation  
Similarity is comfortable (safety)  
Diversity is uncomfortable-uneasiness,  
anxiety, discomfort, sense of threat  
Creates conflict  
Discomfort can lead to growth

**Curiosity**

**Intentionality**

**Openness**

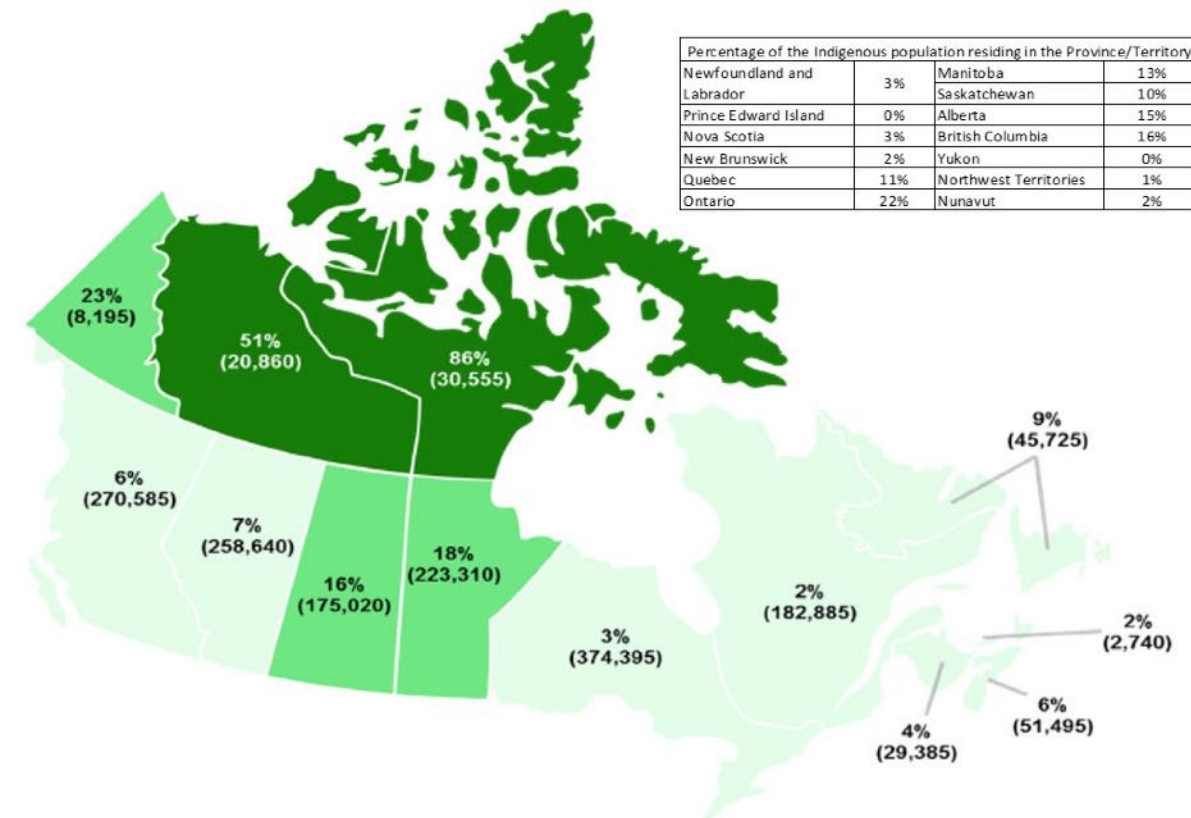
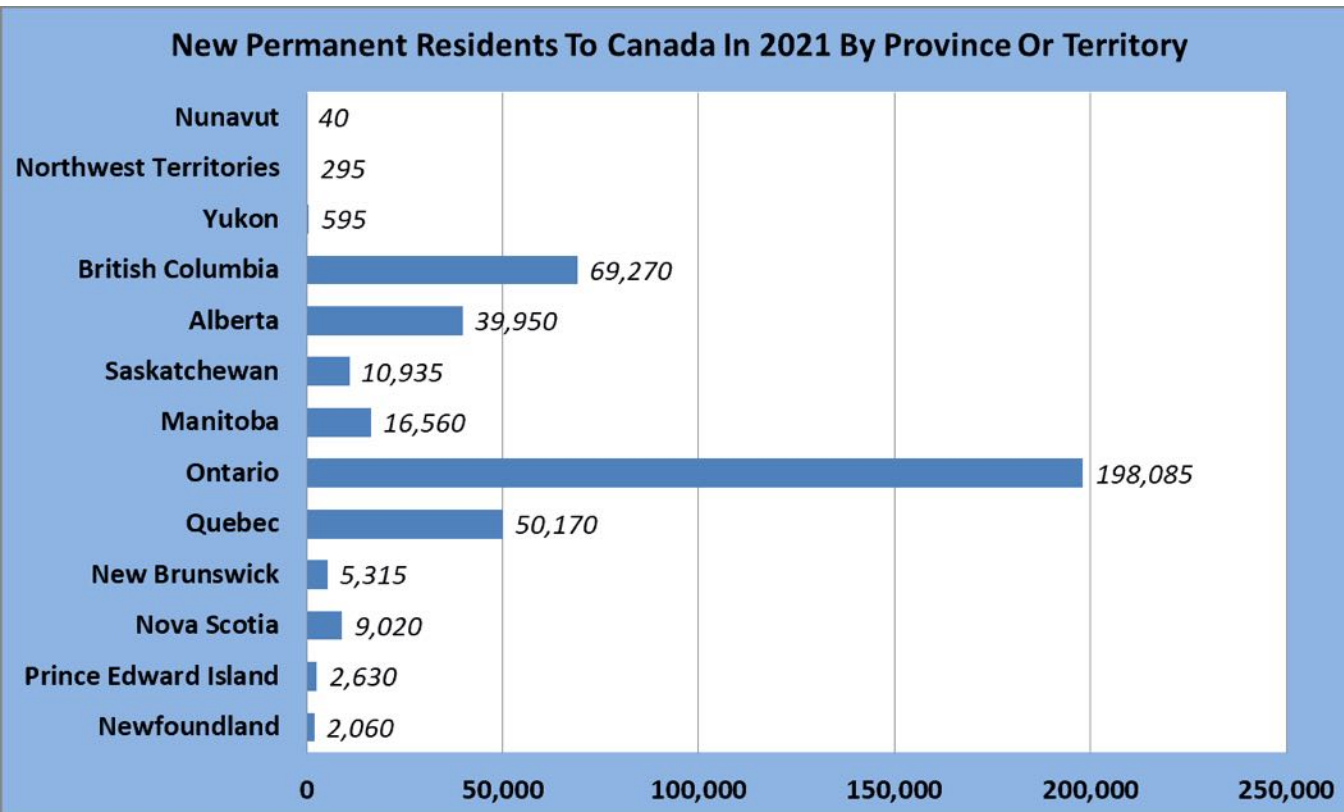




# Diversity of Ethnic Identities in Canada

- Total of 492, 984 people immigrating to the country 2021 -2022.
- Indigenous Peoples-more than 1.67 million self-identified

<https://www.immigration.ca/officials-figures-show-canada-welcomed-405330-new-immigrants-in-2021/>



# Belonging and Diversity

- It takes months and years for immigrants to feel belonging
- Some of them remain strangers
- What about indigenous people? The ripple effects of colonialism and genocide continue to impact their communities
- Trauma effects-feelings of alienation and hopelessness
- **Belonging**-connection and attachment to a place, community, sense of familiarity and safety, tradition, time and space continuity, shared narratives (Antonsich, 2010)
- Belonging depends on politics of inclusion and exclusion
- *Human Flow Trailer*

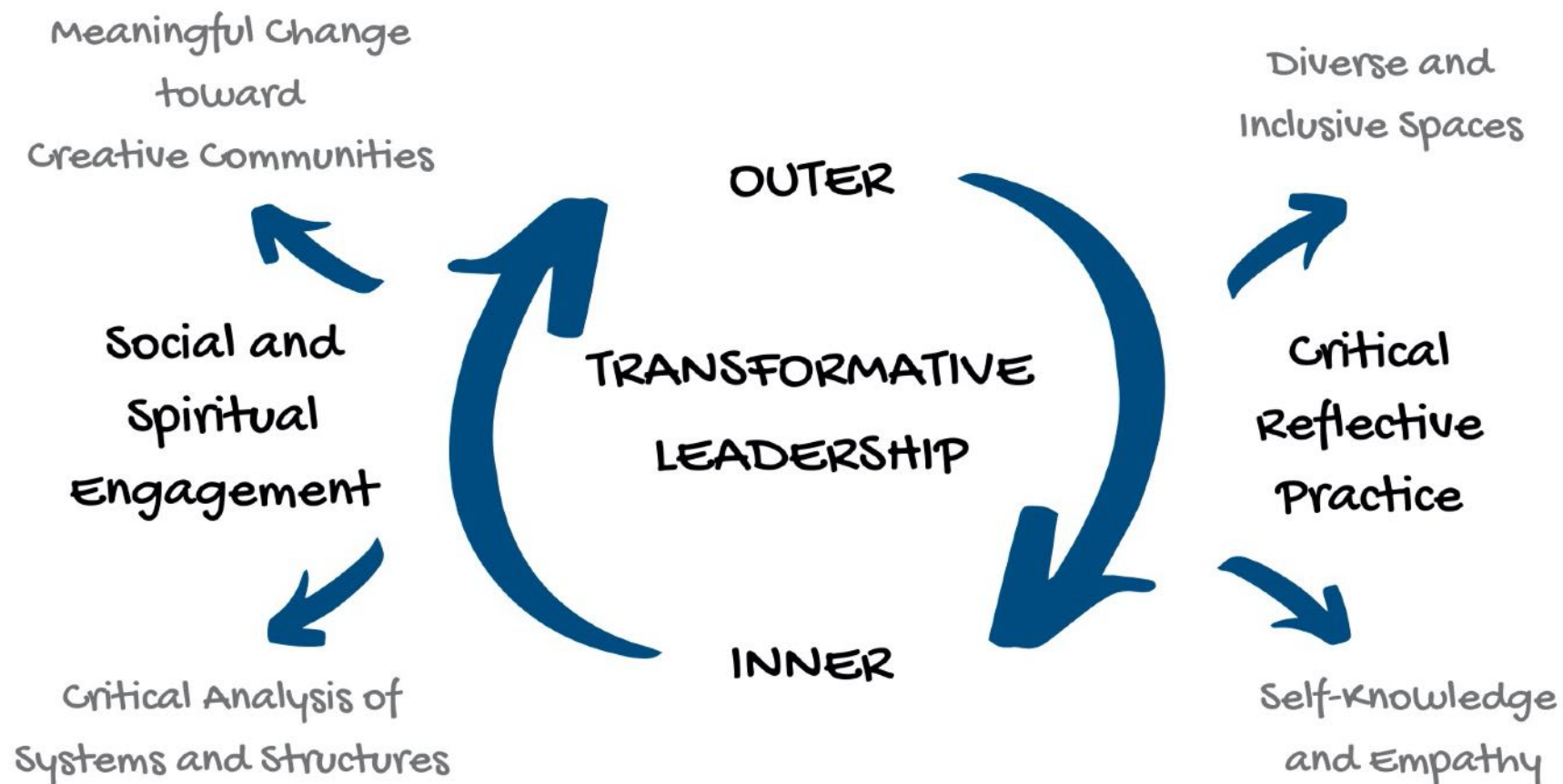
# Spirituality and Compassion

- Finding common ground to accept differences through compassion
- Awareness of one's cultural worldview deepens spirituality
- It is important to acknowledge differences before aiming for unity and not claim spiritual transcendence as a way to deny differences
- Clarifying misunderstandings
- Why does a brother or sister from another culture behave differently?
- Does my behavior express cultural dominance/ethnocentrism?





## Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality MA and GD programs online-development of spirituality for social change



Bridging the inner domain (who I am) with the outer domain (my context, my environment) enables transformative leaders to critically reflect on their practice, and to engage in a meaningful way with the social and spiritual needs of their communities.



# Compassion Circle

- A method to increase empathy, connection and compassion-we practice it in dyads but it can best be done in a circle

This circle builds emotional self-awareness and compassion, creating a safe space for sharing our emotions through active listening and deep connection with others

## 1. Speaker

- Share an experience when you felt a strong emotion (positive or negative) for about 2-3 min.
- Describe the context as detailed as possible, like a scene in a movie, or a picture
- Share how and what you felt

## 2. Listener –mirror, summary

Share what you heard from the speaker, what you noticed, images, meaning, emotions

What I hear you saying... (don't comment or give advice)

Take turns



# Cercle de Compassion

- Il s'agit d'une méthode pour accroître l'empathie, la connexion et la compassion – pratiquée ici à deux mais optimale dans un cercle.
- Le cercle favorise la conscience de soi et la compassion, il crée un espace sécuritaire propice au partage des émotions par l'écoute active et une connexion en profondeur avec les autres.
- **1. Personne qui s'exprime**
  - Partagez une expérience où vous avez vécu une émotion intense (positive ou négative) durant 2 ou 3 minutes. Décrivez le contexte où cela s'est vécu avec le plus de détails possibles, comme une scène de film ou une photographie. Partagez ce que vous avez ressenti et la façon dont cela s'est exprimé.
- **2. Personne qui écoute > résumé**
  - Partagez ce que vous avez entendu de la part de cette personne, ce que vous avez remarqué, les images, les idées et les émotions perçues.
  - *Ce que j'ai entendu de vous c'est...* (ne donnez ni commentaires ni conseils)
  - Faites cela à tour de rôle.



Art by Gada Orum

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