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**Multiculturalism in Canada – Complete Transcript**

**Introduction**

Somebody did his doctoral thesis on this and he tried to think of, “What are the ten things that maybe all Canadians could agree to?”. Some of them are becoming a little iffy these days, but, first of all, that Canada is a wilderness nation, and because of this I think people are very… I grew up on the prairies, and if there would be a storm at night, people would put their lights out, put them on all around so that… when the snow was so thick you can’t see through, and if you were ever stuck, you could just go knock on somebody’s door. And, many a time, my mum would travel to university when she was sixty years old, and she wouldn’t come home at night, and she would just phone and say, “I’m sleeping at somebody’s place,” ’cause the snow was too bad. So, people opened their houses.

**Canadian Characteristics**

We have very many distinctive cultures, and also the regions in Canada. I would imagine then, if you’re up in Hokkaido and in Honshu, there are different customs in these different regions and in the southernmost province, where we find Kagoshima.

It’s a democratic, multi-faith nation. European people didn’t discover Canada. The Aboriginal people were there somewhere between twenty and thirty thousand years. Even a long time ago, the Aboriginal people were very…. The idea of hospitality was there.

We have social welfare. That means that if people are living on the streets, they can go to special shelters, they can get free meals, so there’s this “take care of the people.”

The home of the First Nations. At one time we had eight hundred different (Aboriginal) groups in Canada, but now there are only five languages that exist.

We’re a nation of immigrants. My relatives came to Canada in 1660, and my wife’s in 1634. So we’ve been there a long, long time. So, in my background I have English, French, Irish, Scottish and Aboriginal. OK? You can’t be in Canada for four hundred years and not have intermarried. In fact, the chief of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood; we share the same name.

**Cultural Tolerance**

A nation of rich cultural traditions – Canada has a reputation for being peacekeepers. Now that we’re in Afghanistan, it’s a little iffy. Why this? [Photo of a Sikh man is shown.] What I want to say is that one of the things that Canada has tried to be is very open, and very receptive, to people of different cultures. This, obviously, is a Sikh man. And, in our police, usually the police have a hat. Ours have this famous hat, or mountie’s hat. They have the… they don’t have to wear the hat; they have the right to wear their turban. And when they ride motorcycles, they don’t have to wear a helmet—that’s not in every province—and so they’ve been given that privilege. Another example is that, you know, in France, they can’t wear the veil or anything, and in Canada it’s acceptable. You can wear the veil, you can wear the niqab, the hijab; these are all acceptable.

And, another controversy, another example—this is called a kirpan. It’s the knife that the Sikhs wear. OK? And, there was a controversy about them wearing that in school, you know. So what happened is it went to our top court, and what they decided is they can wear a little plastic one, but they had to have it bandaged in and clamped. And so, they couldn’t do anything…hurt anybody with it. And, all the time they’ve been in Canada, there’s never been one problem in the school with that, and so we try to be as inclusive as possible.

And, Japan and other cultures and Canada, we learn… we say we learn our culture on our mother’s knee or maybe on our father’s knee, depends who takes care of us most, but we learn them through the stories. When I was a kid, my mum taught these different stories, and if it was possible, we would go out and see the place where things happened. I grew up in a village that was 70% Ukrainian, 15% Hungarian, 15% German, five English families, about six French families, and that was my village. If you wanted to buy meat in German, you could go to the store where everybody spoke… You know, so this was… I grew up in multicultural village.

**Reflecting on Historical Wrongs**

One of the things I just want to say that…in every culture, we have things that we have done that we are not proud of. OK? For example, Canada brought Chinese laborers to Canada to work on the railroad. About one third of them died. And, they were not allowed in many cases to bring women there from China for wives, and they could never marry Whites.

We took aboriginal children out of schools and we sent them to residential schools. We took them out of their families. They couldn’t wear their cloths; they couldn’t speak their languages; and so these are not things we are proud of.

We refused asylum. We ensured Black and White schools were segregated. And, unfortunately, during the war we interred Japanese Canadians into camps. And, they stayed there for 10 years, and they lost many many things, and they were not compensated very much. It’s just 2 years ago there was formal apology about this.

**Differences in World View**

Why does Canada need a multiculturalism policy? Because we have different founding peoples. And, when we look at the aboriginal view of the world, the aboriginal view of world is a circle. And so, everything in that circle—plants, animals, rocks, trees, etc.—everything is alive, and everything has equal respect. And, what they say is, “we don’t own the land; the land owns us.” And so, they come from the land.

The more European point of view is that man or woman are at the top, and everything else is below. So, when the Europeans arrived in Canada, we had somebody who has this kind of world view, and somebody who has this kind of world view and, of course, that leads to conflict.

Also in Canada, we had… in the beginning, we only took people from Europe, mostly northern Europeans. Then we needed people for agriculture, so we took people from southern Europe. But, most recently, in the last 60 years, we had a lot of people—because of wars, because of famines— coming from all places around the world. We have people who are Muslim; we have people who are Buddhist; we have people who are Jewish; we have people who are Hindu; we have people who believe in animi… nature-based religions. So there is real mix in Canada, and the challenge is to have all these people live in harmony with one another.

There is racism in Canada. Some Canadians like multiculturalism, and other people think that what multiculturalism is doing is keeping people apart, in separate little—we call them—ghettos (areas where they don’t integrate, so they aren’t really full participants in society).

**PART 2 [5:51]**

**Measures to Help People Integrate**

What I would like to show you, from here on, is to look at some ways in which we try to help people integrate into society. And, probably the easiest thing that we do, sort of, in the schools is that we will have special concerts or multicultural days. So, if we have students from ten or fifteen different groups, we’ll have a multicultural supper at school. And people would bring in…maybe Japanese might bring in rice or tempera or sushi, and somebody else will bring in something else. And so, there’s a sharing of these foods from different cultures, and people could go around to all the stations, and visit, find out—you know—what the food is, what the significance of it is.

When the Chinese New Year comes along, we have a big celebration. We celebrate these things in the school. There’s usually an announcement saying that this is Vietnamese Christmas, etc, and students can actually stay home that one day and celebrate their traditions.

Another thing that I used to try and help people come together… There are three of these books: One says, *Everybody Bakes Bread,* *Everybody Cooks Rice,* *Everybody Cooks Noodles.* And so, in the class, (pass these around if you wanna have a look at them) what I try to do is to have students from different cultures bring in their bread. OK? And so, some people eat pita; some people eat brown bread; some people eat other kinds of bread. And, they all bring them in and explain the significance of their bread. Some people have special bread for marriage. And I imagine in Japan there are many different kinds of rice. And, certain rices are used in certain locations, and other rices are cooked for other occasions. And so, we have all the students bring these in and explain the significance of the bread in their culture. And a lot of people use bread and they pick up their food with their hands and eat it like this—especially people from Africa. And so, in the classroom or in the cafeteria, some people make fun of other people because they do these things. But, when everybody begins to realize, you know, why they eat bread like that…

I do a lot of labeling in the room, so there is “Hello” in all these different languages, “Thank you”—label things like a “Desk,” or could be “Blackboard,” in different languages. And I also have…we build alphabets, and I ask each student to choose a letter or a character from their own alphabet, and they put it up on the wall and they put other…maybe their favorite color or other things. So, when the parents come in, or children look around the room, so they can see “oh there is my language up on the board.” So, it helps them to feel better.

**Q & A**

Moderator (Gregory Strong): Questions now from people who’ve prepared questions. So, maybe we’ll start with Hisashi because you’re going to be going to the University of B.C. (British Columbia) next year.

Hisashi: I was wondering, like, what your motto is when you speak with a student that are from different backgrounds. You know, it’s always hard to blend into an atmosphere that is really international. How do you manage those things?

Professor Courchȇne:

Let’s say from the beginning that multiculturalism isn’t only for the immigrants in Canada. Multiculturalism is for the people who have been living in Canada for a long time. And so, when students come in, I try to learn something…who they are, where they’ve come from, some of their background. And so, well, I want to, certainly, respect the differences and respect their customs. I also want to help them to integrate into society. I think that when we… There are people who don’t do Halloween. There are people who don’t follow Christmas. They don’t… But, they need to know what’s this guy in a red suit running up and down the street all the time in December, you know, you need to at least tell them so that they know. They don’t want to accept Santa Claus; that’s not a problem. But, they must know that when they go to the store, you know, there’s all these little kids sitting on his seat and telling them stories and stuff like that. So, there’s a service that we need to help them to integrate into the culture. As you can… I’ll take an example, the United States tried to impose democracy on Iraq. It just didn’t work. OK? And I can’t impose my customs on somebody else, but I at least want to know…for *them* to know what Canadian customs are and how to avoid doing dumb things, if you want, you know. So, in some ways you’re protecting them. They hear Canadians use the “F” word. OK? A lot of people in Canada say [whispers] “fu\*\*.” OK? You didn’t hear that. And so, but if a Canadian says that it’s kind of OK, but when an immigrant uses that word, it’s a totally different story. The Canadian is likely to tell him, “That’s a bad word; don’t say it!” Then, he’ll turn around to his friend and use it. But…there…So, they need to know those things.