



QUÉBEC INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS WEEK

ACTIVITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS

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Coordination and writing

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Introduction

This program of activities, which is in keeping with the mandate of the Direction de l'Intégration linguistique et de l'Éducation interculturelle (DILÉI) of the Ministère de l'Éducation ensures the development of intercultural education in Québec's educational institutions and in Québec society as a whole. With this goal in mind, the Ministère sees to it that linguistic, religious and ethnocultural diversity receive due consideration in pedagogical and administrative frameworks as well as in education policy and orientations.

Intercultural education fosters the adoption of strategies that promote a positive sense of identity, integrating the cultures of the family, the school and Québec society as a whole and supporting the development of students' and educators' full potential. In this respect, it helps fight the marginalization of groups that continue to be stigmatized by societal prejudices, promotes success and equal opportunities for all and full participation in the construction of a pluralist and inclusive Québec.

The school plays a key role in familiarizing students with diversity and encouraging openness to it, and in preparing them to act and interact with others in a changing world. Openness to diversity and the creation of harmonious intercultural relationships in school contribute to the creation of a climate conducive to the success of all students.

Why take an active role in Québec Intercultural Encounters Week?

Every year, Québec Intercultural Encounters Week (QIEW) provides an opportunity for schools to explore and promote linguistic, religious and ethnocultural diversity in all its richness, and to change prejudicial and stereotypical representations of others in a spirit of equality, respect and solidarity. The QIEW also offers forums to raise awareness of, and spark dialogue about, the various features and signs of this diversity, which include the experiences of immigration and inclusion. The QIEW makes it possible for school communities to address the issues of discrimination, racism and exclusion, and subject them to critical analysis.

Events like the QIEW also encourage educational institutions to incorporate a playful intercultural approach into their annual pedagogical planning. This can be done through the curriculum, daily life at school and interpersonal relationships involving peers, school staff and families, as well as through spontaneous and planned activities, etc.

What is the intercultural dimension of an activity?

The intercultural aspect of an activity basically involves discussion, reflection, questioning, transformation and contrasting viewpoints that are incorporated into two-way or more traditionally unidirectional frameworks to bring together people of different cultures. Intercultural activities are designed to create spaces in which people can share different reactions to events and issues.

Intercultural activities can vary with respect to intensity and objectives, depending on the abilities of the participants, the context and the resources available. The complexity of topics and the reflections that arise when dealing with them are merely two variables among many. Such activities can also draw on a range of actions including awareness raising, training, co-operation and conflict resolution.

Intercultural activities do not require participants to understand all aspects of one another's identities. Those involved are asked, rather, to learn how to engage with one another and to see one another as they are. Intercultural activities are intended to create a framework and the attendant conditions that will help individuals to come together.

It is important that intercultural activities be carried out in ways that avoid certain pitfalls, such as:

- ✘ **associating intercultural phenomena exclusively with immigration**
 - The intercultural dimension includes everyone who is a bearer of culture whether or not they belong to or identify with an ethnocultural, linguistic or religious majority or minority.
- ✘ **assuming that all individual differences or conflictual situations can be explained by individuals' ethnocultural characteristics**
 - Some differences and conflictual situations have to do mainly with context or people's individual characteristics (emotions, attitudes, behaviours, etc.).
- ✘ **espousing essentialist views about cultures based on their folkloric or traditional aspects**
 - Cultures are open and flexible structures that change over time. They cannot be reduced to certain practices and characteristics that are not necessarily shared by all members of the same cultural community.
- ✘ **organizing an activity focusing on a specific population without consulting its members or having them take part in the process**
 - Some populations have experienced historical trauma and have seen the power to make their own decisions taken away from them for years at a time, or even centuries. Therefore, in the interests of empowerment, recognition and respect, it is important to let them address certain issues that are of direct concern to them, decide on the approaches they want to use to deal with these issues, and determine how they want to be depicted.

Suggested intercultural topics for exploration

General themes

- Community life
- Construction of identity
- International relations and development
- Intercultural management
- Interculturalism
- Implicit bias
- Prejudices and stereotypes
- Discrimination
- Social inequality
- Intersectionality

Cultures and ethnicities

- History of colonization and immigration
- Migration routes
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Inclusion and integration
- Regionalization of immigration
- Media representations of diversity
- Indigenous peoples
- Xenophobia
- Racism
- Racial profiling

Languages and communication

- Multilingualism and bilingualism
- Practice of intercultural dialogue
- Accent stigmatization
- Discrimination on the basis of language

Religion, belief and spirituality

- Values and norms
- Religious and spiritual practices
- Contribution of religion to the arts, poetry, music and human civilization
- Religious identity
- Secularism and religious neutrality
- Reasonable accommodation
- Antisemitism and Islamophobia

Literature and enrichment

Group readings of literary works

Reading activities can include various types of literary works such as stories, chronicles, novels, comic books and poems (at the school's discretion) that deal with a variety of intercultural topics.

These activities can also assume various forms, such as:

- bilingual or multilingual readings of literary works
- involvement of families and community members as readers or guides
- discussion periods and artistic creation workshops to complement the reading activity

Objectives

Specific

- Promote language awareness and the inclusion of people learning French
- Strengthen bonds among schools, families and communities
- Share goals
- Raise students' awareness of various intercultural issues

Target population

- Preschool, elementary school and secondary school students

Anthologies

School staff mobilize students to compose poems, anecdotes, short stories, family histories, legends, nursery rhymes or other literary forms (of their own choosing) in connection with an intercultural topic. There can be many variants of an activity, such as:

- creating a bilingual or multilingual work (by translating texts into different languages or from students' first languages into French)
- inviting families to collaborate in the process (from the writing stage to the publication stage)

The texts could then be published in an illustrated volume, a student newspaper or on the Internet.

Objectives

Specific

- Promote language awareness and the inclusion of people learning French
- Strengthen bonds among schools, families and communities

Common

Québec 

- Raise students' awareness of various intercultural issues
- Target population
- Elementary school and secondary school students

Reading circle

The resource person selects a literary work dealing with an intercultural topic of their choice. The students then read the selected work and, as a group, discuss the book's characteristics and share their impressions (e.g. What are the most striking passages? What message does the book convey?).

Objectives

- Encourage students to engage in dialogue and take their turn to speak
- Develop students' awareness of intercultural issues and have them think critically about these issues

Target population

- Elementary school and secondary school students

Living library

A living library embodies the concept of a classical library by having people take the place of books. School staff select and prepare these "living books," that will informally share their personal stories and experiences, be available for discussion and answer questions put to them by visiting students (readers).

Objectives

- Develop students' awareness of the range of lived experience
- Enable individuals to use their experiential knowledge to transmit what they know about certain intercultural issues
- Offer a space for dialogue that makes it possible to deconstruct prejudices and stereotypes

Target population

- Elementary school and secondary school students

Dialogue and discovery

Exhibitions on countries around the world

Working individually or in groups, students pick a country on which they would like to give a presentation (it could be their own country of origin or their parents', or any country that interests them). The presentation could be given in class, or form part of a more comprehensive exhibition. It could also make use of visual and interactive elements such as photographs, meaningful objects, books and music.

Following the presentations, the students work together to create an “intercultural flag” that represents and promotes student diversity.

Objectives

- Enable students to expand the scope of their knowledge
- Seek points of connection between students and encourage openness to the diversity around them

Target population

Elementary school and secondary school students

Introduction to linguistics and language awareness

Students are called upon to become aware of various aspects of language or to interact in different languages (at the teacher's discretion). The following are examples of possible ways to use oral and written language within the context of the activity:

- Show words/expressions/grammatical styles/alphabets etc. from other languages and talk about what they mean (e.g. introduction to sign language, workshops on an Indigenous language)
- Show the etymologies of words and illustrate how closely certain languages resemble others
- Deconstruct various myths, prejudices and stereotypes about language

Objectives

- Develop students' awareness of linguistic diversity
- Enable students to acquire knowledge of the languages of the world, while showing some of the challenges involved in learning a language
- Highlight students' own language or languages

Target population

- Preschool, elementary school and secondary school students

Twining: Intercultural correspondence

This activity is a communications project between different classes, including welcoming classes, regular classes and special classes in the same school. Here are a few examples of means of correspondence:

- Letters
- Emails
- Video calls
- Face-to-face meetings

The school staff involved can adapt communication models in accordance with the language profile of classes and twinned students.

Objectives

- Help students to break out of isolation and facilitate the transition of certain groups of students by creating spaces for discussion
- Build bridges between the various school programs in order to foster social mixing in the school through the development of connections among students

Target population

- Elementary school and secondary school students

Leading interactive intercultural workshops

Depending on the time available, the workshop leader (this could be a school staff member or a representative of an outside organization) organizes one or more workshops (role playing, learning contexts, question-and-answer games, discussion sessions, etc.) with a group of students.

The following is one example of a possible workshop:

Students in the same class form groups of two (if possible, with someone they do not know). Each student guesses five of their partner's favourite things (type of music, food, sport, school subject, colour, etc.) based on their partner's appearance, and then writes these things down. The students then exchange their answers and discuss them. The goal is to show how easy it is to misjudge someone based on their appearance and that it is essential to beware of prejudices and their effects.

Objectives

- Offer a space for dialogue that will make it possible to deconstruct prejudices and stereotypes
- Encourage the practice of intercultural dialogue and speaking up in a spirit of respect and openness
- Develop critical thinking and awareness of intercultural issues in connection with students' experiences

Target population : Elementary school and secondary school students

Lexicon (intercultural knowledge)

At one level, intercultural knowledge is composed of knowledge of different cultures such as living environments, culinary and clothing traditions, ideas about other languages, religious aspects, songs, films and authors.

At the next level, intercultural knowledge is made up of more in-depth knowledge, perhaps on topics that generate anger or pleasure, for example, or on modes of emotional expression, ways of thinking and value systems (human, family, religious, social values, etc.)

Source: *Graines de Paix*, Connaissances interculturelles, <https://www.grainesdepaix.org/fr>.

Transfer of knowledge and learning

Movie, documentary and video projections

The teacher selects a movie, documentary or video on a specific intercultural issue. The projection can also be supplemented with a discussion period or various workshops. Here are a few examples:

- Awareness-raising workshop
- Art-creation workshop inspired by the movie, documentary or video
- Workshop devoted to the reading of fairytales, stories or anecdotes

Objectives

- Raise students' awareness of various intercultural issues
- Help students to expand their intercultural knowledge

Target population

Elementary school and secondary school students

Presentation on models of educational success and student retention

The educational institution invites individuals from various immigration backgrounds, racialized individuals or members of ethnocultural minorities to visit. These guests could be community workers, representatives of organizations, or CEGEP or university students, etc. They could talk about their life experiences, their educational paths or experiences of success, and then engage with the participants in discussions or various types of workshops.

Objectives

- Show the positive contribution of linguistic, religious and ethnocultural diversity in Québec
- Convey a positive image of individuals from immigration backgrounds, racialized individuals or members of intercultural minorities in order to deconstruct the stereotypes and stigmas associated with them
- Encourage students who have more trouble staying in school

Target population

Elementary school and secondary school students

Intercultural talks and roundtable discussions

The educational institution invites a speaker (professor, author, representative of an organization, senior, artist or any other resource person wanting to share their experience) to talk about a topic in connection with an intercultural theme and subsequently lead a discussion or other form of workshop on the topic.

Objectives

- Encourage students to engage in dialogue, take their turn speaking and develop their critical thinking
- Raise students' awareness of intercultural issues
- Help students to expand their intercultural knowledge

Target population

- Secondary school students

Collaboration and closer intercultural ties

Projects in culture and the arts

This activity can cover a variety of intercultural topics and be carried out in one or more art disciplines (at the school's discretion):

Visual arts: drawing, painting, sculpture, pottery, collage, stained glass, mosaic, crafts, etc.

Graphic and visual arts: calligraphy, photography, video, etc.

Performing arts: music, song, dance, drama, puppetry, improvisation, humour, circus, etc.

Students' families are strongly encouraged to participate in the various steps of the art project, be it in the creative process, at the time of the exhibition/opening, or on the day of the performance.

Objectives

Specific

- Strengthen bonds among schools, families and communities

Common

- Foster expression and the recognition, through creative projects, of students' diverse life experiences (relating to identity, language, religion, etc.)
- Raise students' awareness of various intercultural issues

Target population

- Preschool, elementary school and secondary school students

Community cuisine and gastronomy

This activity can take various forms (at the discretion of the school staff) depending on the resources available and the context. The school could:

- invite students and their families to make and taste a variety of local and international dishes and engage in discussion about the ingredients, the origin of the dishes, etc.
- prepare, along with the students and their families, a potluck meal featuring international recipes, and invite participants to introduce others to new restaurants, food stores and public markets.
- show students some of the culinary rituals and traditions in certain countries (e.g. the Japanese tea ceremony)
- put together a book of recipes

Objectives

Specific

- Strengthen bonds among schools, families and communities

Common

- Encourage closer intercultural ties by sparking students' interest in each others' dietary habits

Target population

- Preschool, elementary school and secondary school students

Co-operative sports and games

The sports or recreation dimension could be integrated into activities in a variety of ways (at the discretion of the school staff). The school could, for example:

- ask the students to do a research project on the origins of a particular sport and present their findings to the class
- organize an educational field trip to introduce students and their families to a particular sport
- organize a sports event that brings together students from different backgrounds
- organize cooperative and interactive games that emphasize team spirit

Objectives

Specific

- Encourage closer intercultural ties through activities involving co-operation, inclusivity and verbal and non-verbal communication
- Strengthen bonds among schools, families and communities

Common

- Encourage the students to discover sports and practical games in a variety of social and cultural contexts

Target population

- Preschool, elementary school and secondary school students

Memory aid (intercultural education)

Intercultural education, which takes an inclusive approach, requires going beyond educational practices that highlight diversity solely through activities focused on dance, music, traditional clothing and food typical of students' countries of origin.

Class visits and experience

Visit to a historic site or a place of cultural expression

Depending on the place visited (place of worship, Indigenous space, museum, craft studio, historic district, public garden, park, library, theatre, etc.), school staff could call on a guide or a community member to give a presentation on the place and its various sociocultural and sociohistoric dimensions. The visit could also be combined with a discussion period or other complementary activities (games, food tasting, initiations, etc.).

Objectives

- Show the positive contributions that immigration and linguistic, religious and ethnocultural diversity have made to Québec
- Have students learn about the existence, meaning, importance and symbolic value of historic sites and places of cultural expression that form part of the Québec landscape

Target population

- Preschool, elementary school and secondary school students

Visit to a professional work environment

As part of an educational field trip, students could be invited to visit a professional work environment associated with intercultural issues because of the nature of its professional duties or day-to-day realities. Resource people on staff could arrange a tour of the place, explain their role and the importance of their work, talk about the challenges they face, have students participate in workshops, etc.

Here are a couple of suggestions for professional work environments that students could visit:

- Community organizations
- Social services centre
- Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse

Objectives

- Using concrete examples, raise students' awareness of some of the intercultural issues that arise in professional work environments
- Introduce students to the intercultural approach in intervention practices
- Encourage students to become involved, on a short- or long-term basis, in intercultural coexistence in their school, neighbourhood, city, etc.

Target population

- Secondary school students

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