



THE DiversiPro Coach



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Welcome to the Latest Edition of The DiversiPro Coach



Visit a church, temple, synagogue or other place of worship and you will likely hear a message of love, justice and inclusion. But how easy is it for faith communities to practice what they preach? In this issue, we look at faith communities and visionaries who are building inclusive spaces and practices. We meet Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, Gary Commins and the United Church of Canada and hear about their work to build inclusive, intercultural institutions that welcome all. *Editor: Jacqui DeBique*

Do You Know???

- 1 In 2001, the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal held that this ultimatum by an employer amounted to constructive dismissal of a store employee, a Jehovah's Witness.
 - a) Display poinsettias or leave
 - b) Remove religious wear or leave
 - c) Contribute to the birthday gift pool or leave

Source: www.ogilvyrenault.com/fr/centreDeResources_1159.htm

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The Diversity Experience movie is now online.
Watch it at www.diversipro.com.

Katalina Tahaafe-Williams: Advocate for Inclusive Faith Communities

A Tongan-Australian, Katalina Tahaafe-Williams' life and work are a global ministry to build intercultural communities. She helps Christians and other faith communities develop life-changing intercultural engagement with each other.

Tahaafe-Williams says many of these communities have a fundamental misconception that actually encourages exclusion: that faithfulness to God — or Allah or any other supreme being — requires them to put up barriers within and across faith communities. This, she says, is an age-old challenge that reflects our inability to learn from past mistakes.

The first part of the answer lies with leaders. Change, she says, calls for strong and honest leaders who are prepared to challenge the culture of exclusion that affects many sectors and organizations. Organizations and communities will change when leaders honestly examine themselves first and find the strength and integrity needed to bring about change.



Director, *Communitas Programme, United Theological College, Australia*

Keynote speaker at the *United Church of Canada's Behold! One Another: An Intercultural Conference, November 2008, Toronto*

- 2 A Phoenix jury awarded more than \$287,000 in a religious discrimination suit against Alamo Car Rental for what offense?
 - a) Refusing to hire a job candidate who was Jewish
 - b) Firing a Somali employee for refusing to remove her head scarf during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan
 - c) Denying an employee time for prayer during work hours

Source: www.eeoc.gov/press/6-4-07.html

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Katalina Tahaafe-Williams: Advocate for Inclusive Faith Communities cont'd

“Those who talk about ‘not living in the past’ expose a fundamental blindness to the fact that the past absolutely shapes what we are today in far reaching, major and minor ways and details.”

The second part of the answer lies with individuals who are privileged to belong to the dominant culture. She challenges them to educate themselves about their own past and the past of others, and to commit to ensuring that destructive parts of history will not be repeated.

Her vision of transformed, intercultural communities is one where communal values are the norm and no single individual's self-interest dominates. The result: a vibrant, creative, richly diverse caring community, where people are united by love and compassion and are able to live and coexist in the midst of differences with respect, justice and harmony.

The same can be said for any organization – secular or sacred – that wants to be inclusive and productive.



Inclusion Strategies from the United Church

In 2006, the United Church of Canada formally committed to becoming an intercultural church and asked members of its culturally marginalized communities to offer leadership in this venture. [The Intercultural and Diverse Communities in Ministry Unit](#) was established and now guides policy and practice to help the church overcome lingering colonial attitudes in human resources and church governance. Just three years later, many congregations are affirming and celebrating diversity in ways that are uniting both members and the wider community.

Learning from some United Church congregations, here are some strategies to help your organization become more inclusive.

Do You Know??? cont'd

3 Teenager Lydia Playfoot made an unsuccessful challenge in the U.K. High Court against a school prohibition when the judge ruled what piece of jewellery worn by teenagers was not recognized as a symbol of faith?

- a) A promise ring
- b) A chastity ring
- c) Kara bangle

Source: www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article4423198.ece



Inclusion Strategies from the United Church cont'd

Community Connections

- Collaborate with neighbouring community agencies to provide capacity-building programs for new immigrants.
- Form committees to facilitate relationship-building between members of the existing and emerging populations.

Leadership

- Reconfigure board structure to support organizational objectives.



Programs & Initiatives

- Recognize that norms vary across cultural groups. (One congregation came to learn that Pakistani-Canadian families welcome last-minute pastoral visits while visits with Japanese-Canadian families must be arranged at least one month in advance.)
- Make provisions for translation. (One congregation installed a new projector and motorized screen to project the liturgy — the words and practices of worship — music and scripture in English and Mandarin.)
- Incorporate cultural traditions in special events. (During coffee hour, one group prepares a roasted pig for special occasions.)
- Make room for cultural expression in traditional settings, e.g., incorporate culturally-distinct music, dances, rituals, etc. (Pakistani-Canadians in one church remove their shoes before coming to the altar and cover their heads before reading scripture.)



The Workplace

- Manage intercultural tensions by creatively engaging cultural differences and developing alternate styles of working, teaching, etc.
- Staff and volunteers receive training on how to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. (In the United Church, this training is mandatory for theology students and ministry personnel and lay people in leadership; policies are supported by a staff portfolio.)

These strategies reflect four of the six most important factors DiversiPro Inc. believes affects relationships between organizations and their customers. We developed “The Six Cylinder™ Framework” to help organizations assess, strategize and implement their approach to diversity and inclusion with greater success. To learn more, check out “Diversity on Six Cylinders” at <http://www.diversipro.com/index.php?o=sixcylinders>

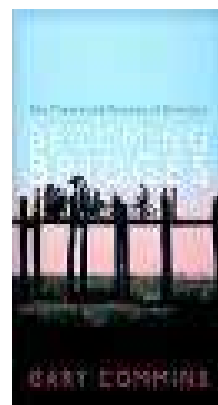
Now You Know???

Quiz answers: 1 = a, 2 = b, 3 = b.

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Book Review

by Hamlin Grange, President, DiversiPro Inc.



Becoming Bridges: The Spirit and Practice of Diversity

by Gary Commins

For some leaders, diversity and inclusion work is more than a job; it's a calling. The ability to help individuals and organizations navigate the often thorny landscape of diversity issues is among the greatest rewards. *Becoming Bridges* is a wonderful and important addition to the library of any leader who seeks to build an inclusive organization. It is an easy and non-preachy read.

Gary Commins, an ordained Episcopalian pastor of a multicultural and bilingual church, encourages readers to see both our differences — religion, race, culture, class, gender or sexual orientation — and our similarities from a spiritual perspective.

Commins observes that “when ‘diversity’ is seen merely as a cliché or an innovation, it loses this most basic and radical step, the step into and beyond compassion. Such an awakening is at the root of diversity.”

Using stories from encounters with parishioners, Commins demonstrates that diversity is not only part and parcel of the faith community but inherent in the secular community as well.

Each chapter ends with a spiritual exercise (to reflect on the content); spiritual counsel (short quotations for meditation); and spiritual practice (encouraging personal commitments to real or symbolic change).

For Commins, diversity is about building human bridges. He says that part of the mystery of diversity is to practice it in our lives as people are, not as we wish they might be or as we wish we might be.