

# Promoting Intercultural Engagement

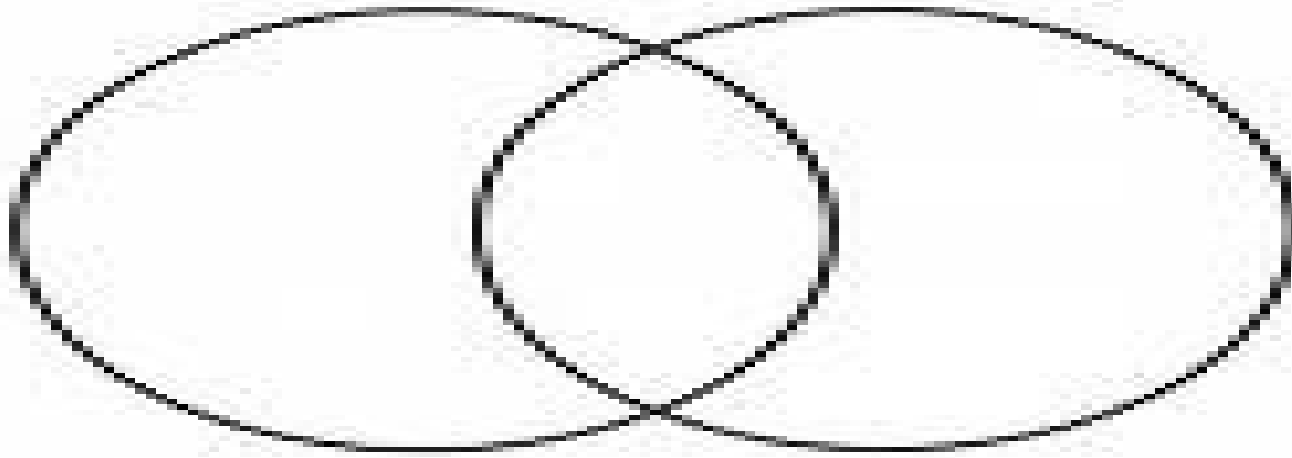
**“If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito.”**

*(Sudanese Proverb)*



# **Intercultural Communication Skills**

## **Cultivating The Space in Between**



**Kathryn Brillinger**  
**CEDP**  
**Phase 4**

May 27, 2010

# So who am I?

Kathryn Brillinger,  
Unionville, ON, Circa 1970



# Objectives

**Recognizing the opportunities that intercultural knowledge can bring**

- Culture and its Impact
- Principles of Intercultural Communication
- ICC (Inter-Cultural Communication) Repair Strategies

# Non-Verbal and Verbal Cues

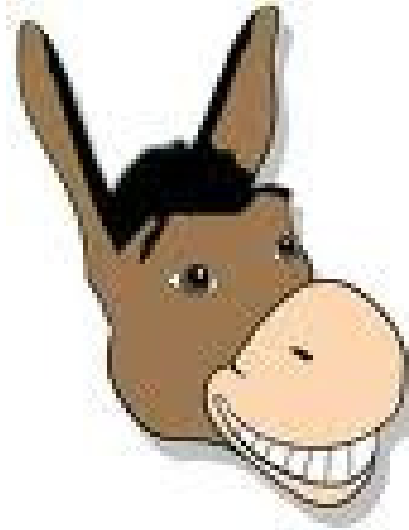
- If someone were filming a movie of a teaching encounter when you were internally disapproving or anxious, how would it look?
- Would it be a comedy, satire, tragedy, drama?
- What facial expressions do you assume when you are upset? What subtle posture cues would the viewer see?

# Mini Case Study

- I went to a teacher with 3 of my friends because we all had the same problem, and we wanted another better student to talk for us, but the professor said rudely – “One at a time. He can go, he’s not in my class!”  
(College Example)
- Turn to a partner and analyze this case from both professor and student viewpoint  
(2 minutes)

# Assume makes an \_\_\_ of u and me

- In the case study, people assume interference or lack of gumption by plaintiff or unnecessary nuisance to themselves but ....



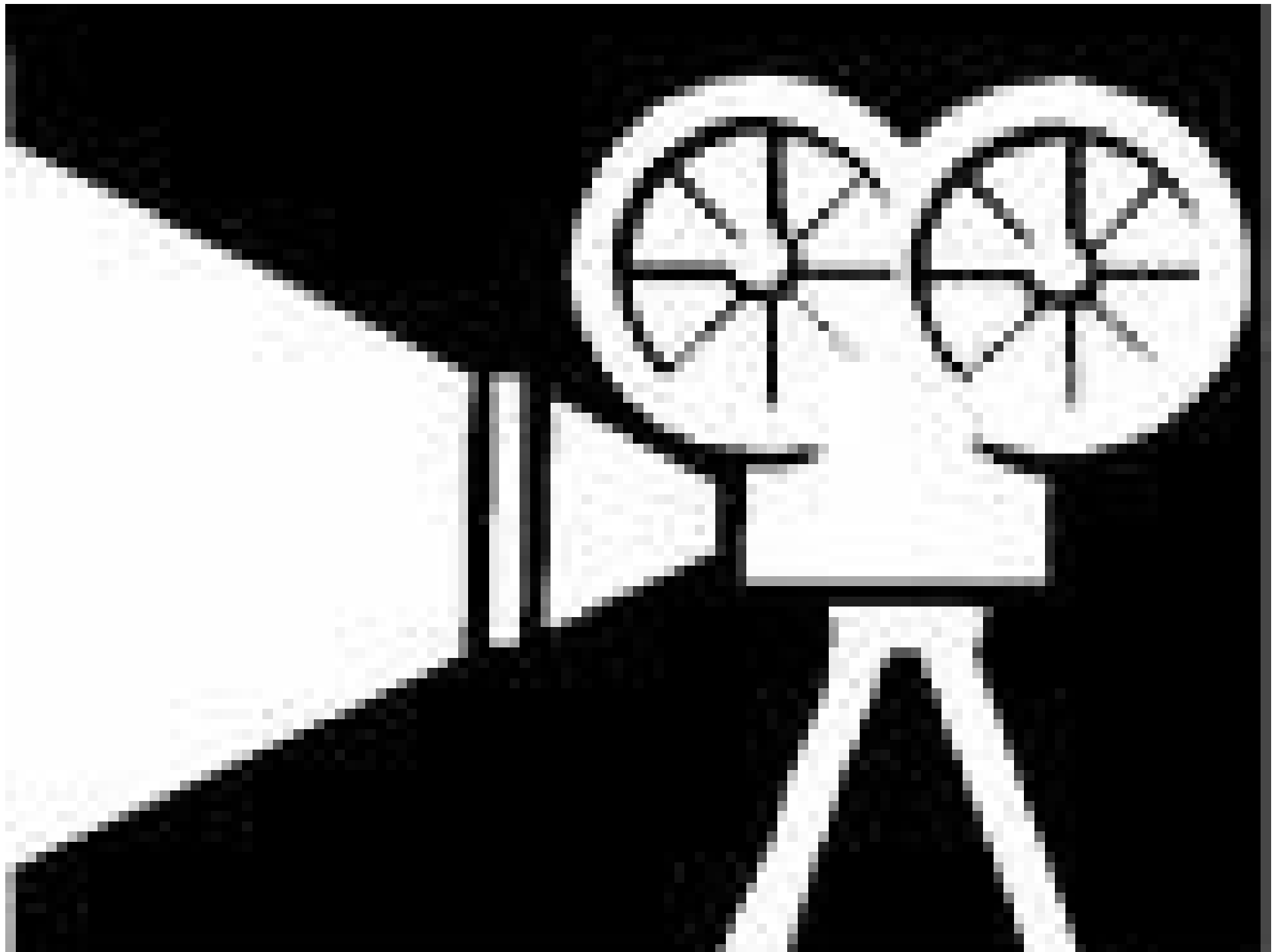
# Cultural Tip

Many non-North Western cultures do not have the 'plaintiff' speak for themselves.

- In China - the best student contract
- In the Middle East -the client with the lawyers
- In South America - power to the best talker
- In other cultures -the person ultimately responsible for welfare in the new country – older brother, husband, mother, family friend

\*\*Study theories related to individualistic-collectivistic continuum (Hofstede)





# Stop, Start, Continue



# Internationalization in Canada has not kept pace with **Globalization**

- **Globalization** is the economic, political, and societal forces of international involvement.
- **Internationalization** is the upgrading of international perspectives, skills and resources via inter-cultural training and enhanced language support.

(Altbach & Knight, 2007)





# O' Canada!



Multiculturalism  
supported by  
Interculturalism -  
our most  
important  
experiment

O Canada, *Drew Brook-Cormack*, 1000-pc jigsaw puzzle

# Areas of Diversity That Impact Education

We need to consider ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, and

- Personality
  - Gender
  - Age (Veteran, Baby Boomer, x, y and ...)
  - Time in Canada, generation 1.5
  - Profession
  - Socio-economic status/employment status, 2<sup>nd</sup> career
  - Wellness/illness and Mobility
  - Abilities/disabilities
  - Mental health
- etc.

# Prejudice and Discrimination Still Exist...

- Prejudice
  - = Negative attitude towards another group
- Discrimination
  - = Observable adverse behavior towards group
- Prejudice + Discrimination + Organizational/Dominant Group Power
  - = Unconscious and/or deliberate denial of recognition, power, and rights

# Nadia-Alysha-Zahra-Tameera



***“Each new generation is responsible to ensure the survival of the seventh generation.”*** (Canadian Aboriginal Belief)



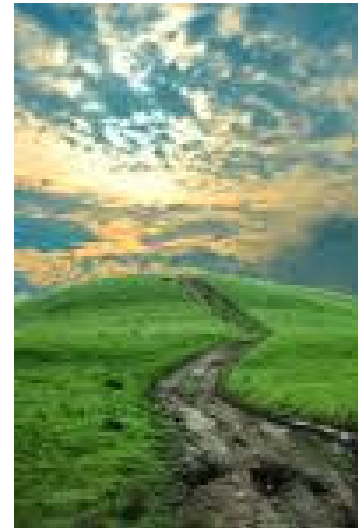
What is culture and how does it impact interactions?



# Culture = Shared Meaning

“Shared meaning” informs values, beliefs, standards, language, thinking patterns, behavioral norms, communications styles, etc.

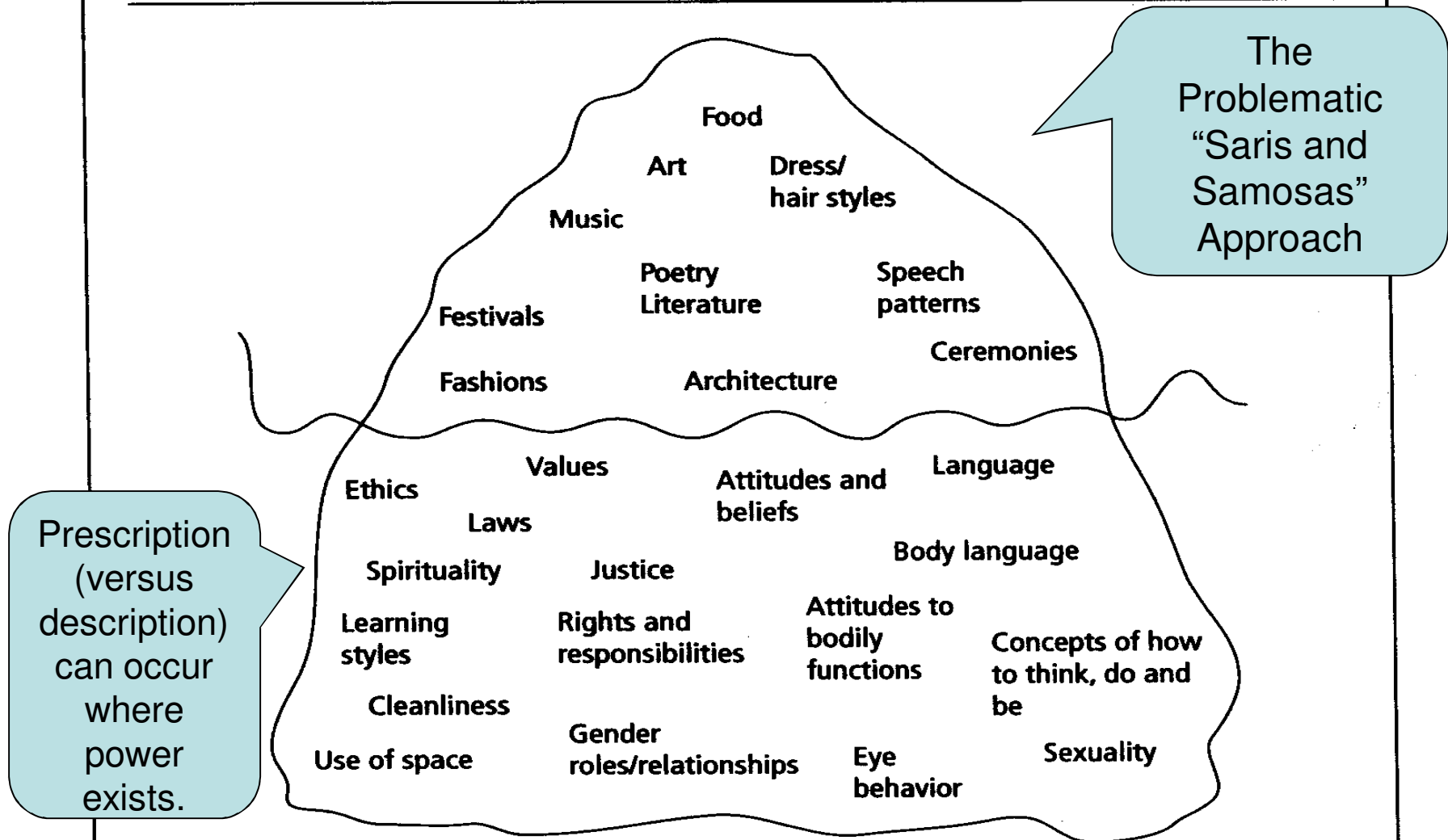
Culture guides the decisions and actions of individuals and groups.



# “Shared” Meaning

- Cognitive (concepts, ideas)  
“Status must be preserved.”  
“Hierarchies must be flattened.”
- Affective (emotions)  
“I think that’s perfectly ok.”  
“I think that’s primitive/disgusting!”
- Behavioral (procedures, rules, rituals)  
“Make yourself noticeable via contributions.”  
“The nail that sticks out gets pounded down.”

## Exhibit 16.4 The Cultural Iceberg



Source: Based on Brislin (2000). Used by permission.

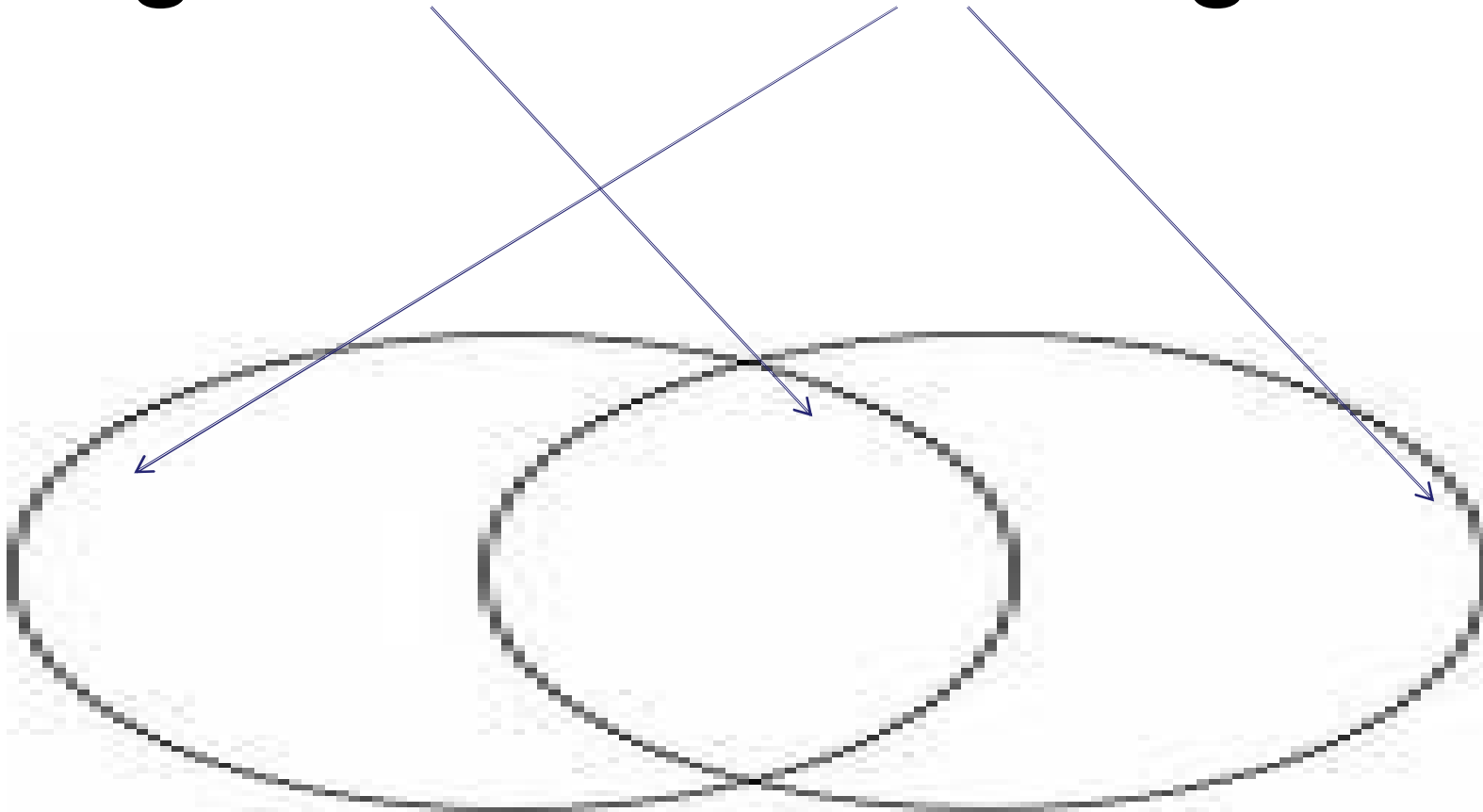
One culture's communication  
competence can be another's  
incompetence!



Few people actually want to be rude  
or difficult!!! We strive for  
connections.



# Negotiables and Non-Negotiables



Tell a partner 2 of your non-negotiables.



**Striving for a Balance:  
Continuums NOT Stereotypes**

# Haptics

(the study of touching behaviour)

Seven types of touch:

\* **positive affect** (support, appreciation, inclusion)

\* **playfulness**

\* **control** (compliance, attention wanted, response needed)

\* **ritual** (greeting/leave-taking)

\* **hybrid** (mix some of above as in a hug good-bye)

\* **task-related**

\* **accidental**

Jones and Yarbrough (1985)





# Proxemics

(the study of distance in interaction)

- **Public**
- **Social**
- **Personal**
- **Intimate**



Traditional  
Forms of  
Greeting



# Oculesics

(the study of eye contact)

- attentive focus/challenging stare
- shifty-eyed/respectful looking away
- flirtatious up-look/“adultery of the eyes”
- lustful glance/complimentary notice
- attempt to access vocabulary/lack of attentiveness or ability



# Non-Verbal Communication Surprises



- Share an example with a partner of being surprised by a non-verbal difference

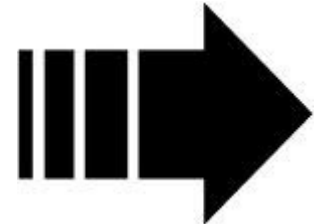
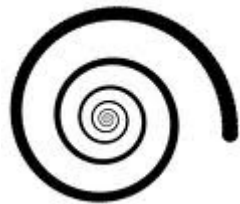
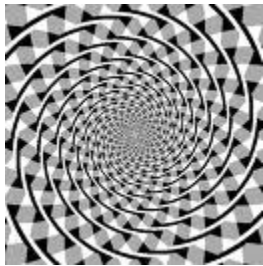
# Gesture

- The triangle
- The wrist
- The hand to heart
- The 3 per utterance



# Presentation of Writing

- Kaplan's 'squiggles'
- Writer-responsible versus reader-responsible
- The world as knowable versus the world as mystery



# Case Study: Alejandra and the Essay

What rules are  
involved?

1.

2.

3.

What cultural values are  
displayed?

1.

2.

3.

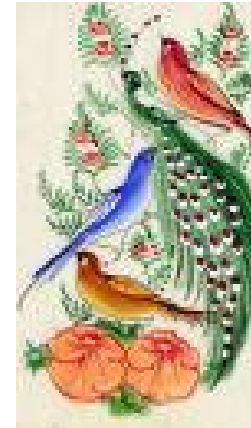
To what degree  
did both parties  
“share  
meaning”?

# Presentation of Self



- Compliments
- Cologne
- Coffee
- Queries

فروع من له



- And Mohson's finding Canadians rude in the college hallways

# The Persian concept of “ta’arof” involves language, discourse, culture etc.

- **Central concept** = warm welcoming, praising, and good manners
- Origins in the term for “mutual recognition”
- **Essential ability** for negotiating relationships
- Involves offers, compliments, exchange of pleasantries, food, gifts, and invitations
- **Expression of** selflessness and humility - necessary for keeping face - “shaxsiiyaet” and showing sincerity and respect - “ehteram”
- **Can be interpreted** as empty formality or ritual courtesy by NA but runs much deeper - has no equivalent in NA culture
- Iranians can be **dismayed by** a lack of ‘ta’arof’ in our classroom cultures

(Cultural info from Eslami, 2005)



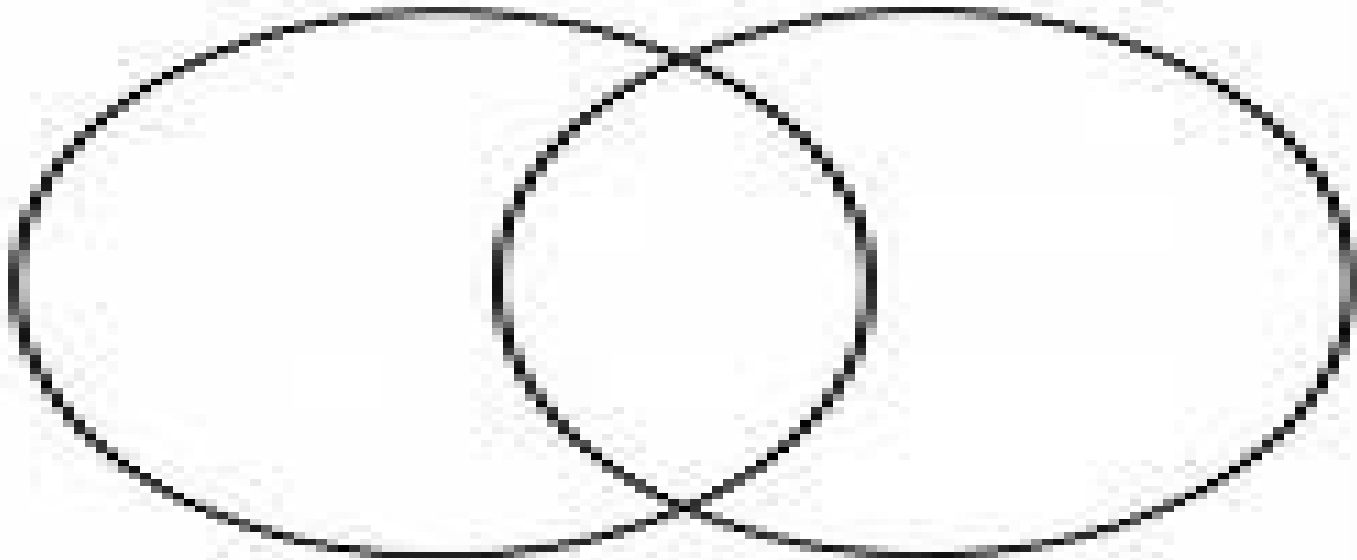
# Moving Forward



# **A Model for Intercultural Engagement: Principles and Practices**

Yuri Kagolovsky and Kathryn Brillinger

# Cultivating the Space in Between: **Sharing Meaning**



What are some principles  
that can ease  
intercultural communication?



# Principle #1

We are cultural beings.



## Principle #2

We are unaware of how our cultures inform our perceptions, cognition, emotions and actions.



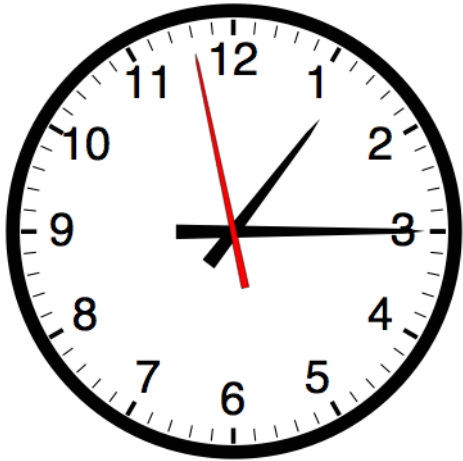
# Principle #3

Culture provides unstated sets of rules by which we operate and reward and punish.

E.g. Kathryn's big presentation in Mexico City.

# From Monochronic to Polychronic

(Chronemics)



## Monochronic Concepts

- one thing at a time is best - concentrate on the task at hand
- time commitments/deadlines/schedules are serious
- adhere religiously to plans



# Polychronic Concepts

- Do many things at once
- Commit to people and relationships not time
- Change plans often and easily



# Principle #4

We are unaware of our own level of inter-cultural sensitivity and skills.

# The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity by Milton Bennett

**ethnocentric stages**

**ethnorelative stages**

denial

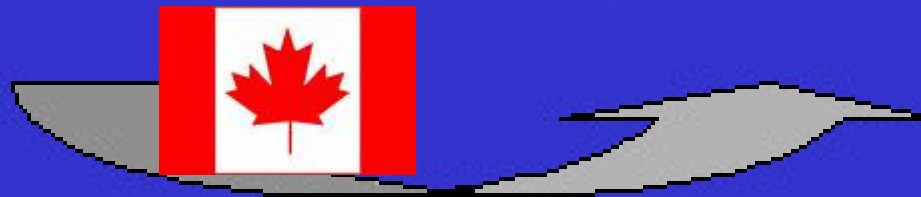
defense

minimization

acceptance

adaptation

integration



**cognitive**

**affective**

**behavioural**

Changes must occur in three areas.

# Principle #5

Building inter-cultural communication skills is an ongoing, recursive process.



## Principle #6

Inter-cultural  
communication is the  
responsibility of each party.



# Guan Xi (Collectivism)

- Explained the problem as an absence of *guan xi* “an extensive interdependent relationship among all one’s family and social connections in which favors are exchanged necessarily.” (Swagler & Ellis, 2003)
- Being independent is contrary to the Chinese ideal of *guan xi* or collectivism and was described as a “serious ordeal.”
- A majority mentioned a concern with having to learn to be independent.
- Being able to be independent was found to be a crucial factor in being able to adjust to North America.
- We need to help newcomers feel supported as they learn to live without extensive *guan xi*.



# Face

- Dominant concept in interpreting and regulating social behavior
- Must be maintained and enhanced
- Each person in a social group is responsible for saving his/her own face and the face of others
- The person with authority, having a higher social standing, is expected to adhere to a higher standard of ethics and to maintain self-control
- should not “argue”
- should protect the face of others and the institution

*“I lost a lot of face by being unable to answer the question.  
How could he do that to me? I really have no face now.”*

(Chan, 2005)



# Principle #7

Inter-cultural communication necessitates a re-distribution of power.



E.g. Examples from Canadian and world history



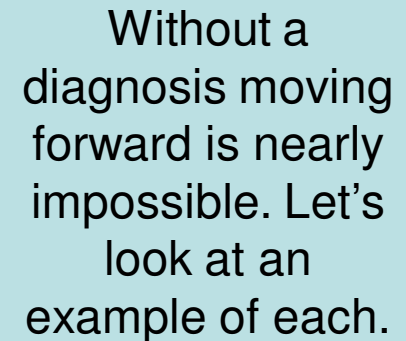
**“You may never know what results come of your action, but if you do nothing there will be no result.” - Ghandi**

# Cultural Competency Success

- Everyone can experience
- Everyone can contribute
- Everyone can learn

# Seven questions to ask ourselves when **intercultural communication** goes wrong:

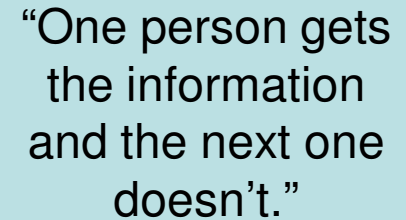
- Is it language ability?
- Is it discourse rules?
- Is it culture?
- Is it the situation or context?
- Is it a systemic barrier? Is it racism, nationalism, or discrimination?
- Is it someone's personality or life stress?
- Is it me?



Without a diagnosis moving forward is nearly impossible. Let's look at an example of each.

# Is it language ability?

- pronunciation
- intonation
- use of modals
- use of imperative



“One person gets the information and the next one doesn’t.”

# Is it discourse rules?

- pushing too much to make a connection
- not pushing to make a connection
- # of items in answer to a prompt
- pushiness
- lack of self-promotion
- giving of compliments
- asking for too much detail
- challenging information given
- Not obeying 'wrap-up' cues

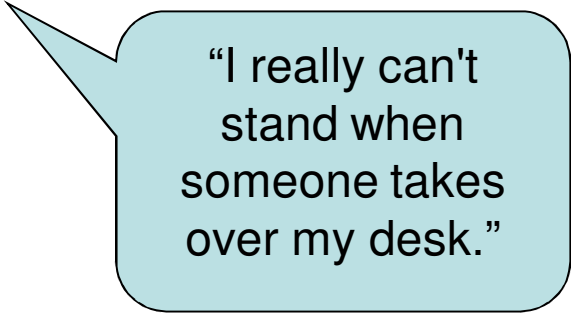
“People from \_\_\_\_\_ act like they are your best friend.”

“People from \_\_\_\_\_ never give up. And they never go away”

“People from \_\_\_\_\_ don't make a connection. Seem too stiff.”

# Is it culture?

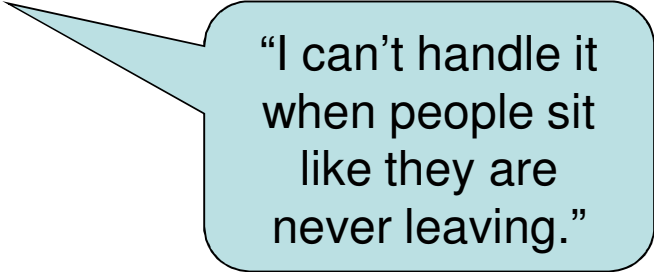
- handshakes
- proxemics
- timing
- haptics
- clothing etc.



“I really can't stand when someone takes over my desk.”

# Is it the situation or context?

- noise level in office
- privacy in office
- needing to give personal information
- time allotted



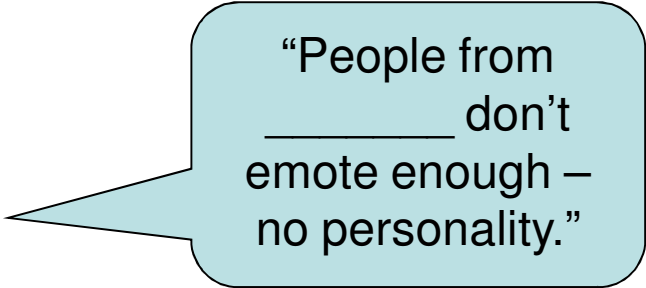
“I can’t handle it  
when people sit  
like they are  
never leaving.”



# Is it a systemic barrier?

- international credential assessment
- criteria for programs
- falsely raised expectations

# Is it racism, nationalism, or discrimination?



“People from \_\_\_\_\_ don’t emote enough – no personality.”

Is it someone's  
personality or  
life stress  
or learning  
style?



Is it me?

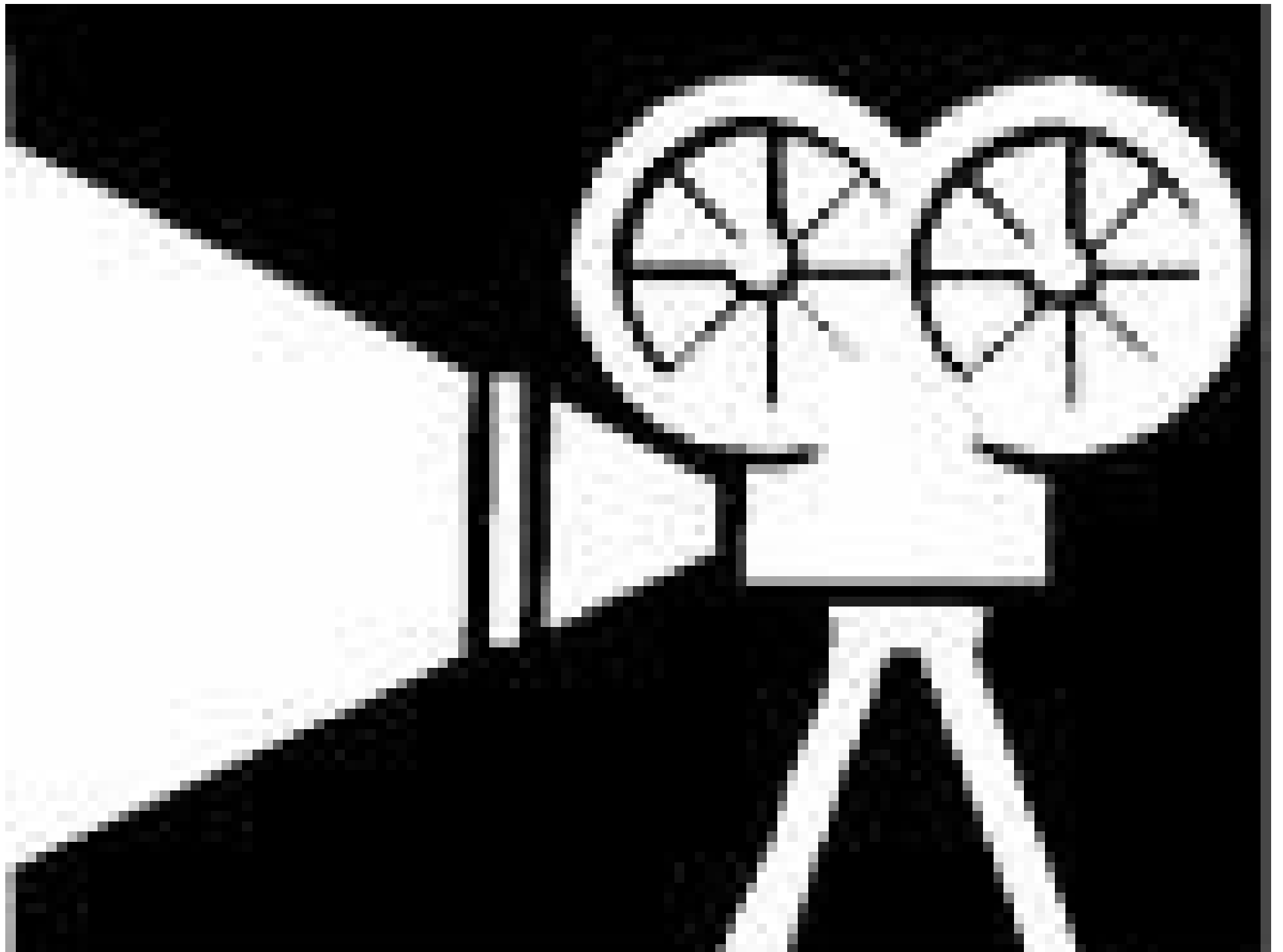


# ICC Repair Strategies

- Asking someone why they do something can cause a defensive reaction
- “Why” questions can be seen as promoting potentially unfavorable comparisons and “otherness”
- Use an invitational approach that can create a dialogue and allow for shared meaning

# Repair Strategies

- **What does <this> mean to you personally?**
- What does <this> mean to you as a member of your group?
- What does <this> mean to the community where you live now/lived before?
- **Do you know the history of this phenomenon? Has it changed over time?**
- **If <this> does not happen, what would it mean to you** (your group, your community, society)?



# Expect Challenges - Nurture Empathy

- Communication in a heterogeneous context is tiring and can not take place in the same way as in a homogeneous context.
- We need to be explicit about expectations and responsibilities.
- Intercultural communication becomes more interesting and less frustrating if we have principles and methods to apply!

# Summary

- We need to continually develop our intercultural competency to support our diversity.
- We need to determine and exemplify best practices.
- We need to foster hope and resiliency in ourselves and in our students/clients.



# Stop, Start, Continue





# Thank you!

Questions?

Comments?

Suggestions?

Complaints?

Concerns?

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# The Space in Between

“Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue, a wonderful living side by side can grow, if they succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it possible for each to see the other whole against the sky.”



Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)