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## Introduction to Special Theme Issue — Multicultural Counselling: Embracing Cultural Diversity

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Canadian society continues to expand in its richness and complexity of cultural diversity and pluralistic worldviews. We have an increasing number of new immigrants, refugees, international students, sojourners, returnees, intermarried couples, and children with so-called “mixed race” and multi-ethnic backgrounds. Helping professionals cannot be effective or ethical in their practice without recognizing the existence of ethnocultural diversity and various types of challenges inherent in intercultural communication and helping contexts.

In this special issue, the authors explore the practice of counselling and its conceptual framework, from a multicultural perspective. Nancy Arthur explores how counsellors can offer meaningful psychoeducational workshops to help prepare international students for re-entering their home countries, using vignettes of critical incidents, self-awareness raising questions, and practical life and career planning activities.

Vance Peavy and Han Li take a constructivist approach to understanding clients’ personal experience and meaning making, with special attention to social and contextual cultural variables. They warn counsellors to re-examine their habituated interview styles and assumptions, and offer a set of practical suggestions and guidelines for engaging in sensitive and respectful discourse with cross-cultural clients.

Paul Pedersen and Allen Ivey discuss ten “culture-centred” learning activities designed to improve trainees’ group microskills. They argue that group workers need to heighten their interpersonal sensitivity and actively engage in diverse and flexible thinking and in the construction of contextual meanings. In this regard, the proposed exercises offer opportunities to sharpen trainees’ multicultural senses.

A counsellor education program is a microcosm of a multicultural social environment. It is an arena for negotiation with issues of trust and power differentials. Patrick Morrisette directs our attention to critical learning-enhancing and inhibiting factors in working with First Nations and Aboriginal counsellor trainees. He invites counsellor educators to re-examine their habituated mainstream cultural styles of communication and instruction. He offers specific and culturally sensitive recommendations, such as acclimatizing students to a mainstream university setting and counselling program, dealing with the culturally different ways of expressing and handling emotions, and use of metaphors and stories in communication.

Ishu Ishiyama discusses key concepts of Japanese Morita therapy to illustrate alternative ways of understanding anxiety, human nature, change process, and goals of helping. He points out how counsellors can inadvertently perpetuate clients' self-preoccupations and rejection of the anxious self, and offers concrete examples of counsellor responses to help clients become more of "a bending willow tree" against the winds of anxiety and the hardships of life circumstances.

We hope that readers will find this small collection of articles both challenging and enriching with helpful suggestions for expanding their multicultural counselling competencies and models of helping and personal development.

Finally, we wish to dedicate this special issue to Dr. Vance Peavy, one of the contributing authors to this issue, who passed away unexpectedly last year before seeing his co-authored article in print. He was a renowned counsellor educator in Canada and Europe and a former editor of this Journal.