

**FINDING COMMON GROUND  
CIVICALLY ENGAGING DIVERSITY  
WORKSHOP GUIDE**

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# **CIVICALLY ENGAGING DIVERSITY**

## **Shifting Paradigms**

As Canadian society continues to diversify, the value systems of people from a wide variety of faith and religious backgrounds also continue to diversify. Yet without a common thread to bind us together our divergent worldviews can pull us apart. Therefore the “common ground” we seek is informed by our fundamental commitment to universal human rights. Getting to this common ground requires social architecture to allow young adults of different backgrounds to ensure that Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms becomes lived through them. This leads to a harmonious and plural society, as well as a model Canada can export to the world.

This addendum to the Finding Common Ground Toolkit is meant to empower youth of any faith or cultural heritage with resources they can use to engage fellow youth of diverse faiths and cultures in their local communities. Given the dramatic demographic changes taking place in our society, civically engaging diverse youth will require making some paradigm shifts: one of the most important of those being a shift in the way that we understand the relationship between religion and secularism, between values and actions.

## **Working for the Common Good**

A new generation of young adult Canadians who come from a variety of religions, faiths, spiritual, or ethical movements are seeking common ground in ways that are redefining how we understand identity and community.

Rather than get caught up in language about what is “religious” and what is not, young people are taking their worldviews however articulated or lived and working together in multi-faith and cross-cultural contexts.

Canadian youth are finding ways to negotiating their values however they define them in the public sphere for the common good. The CCMW is contributing to this process by empowering young adults through a central framework of universal human rights as laid out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to authentically bring their entire selves to school, to work, and civil society without having to live in a kind of religious or cultural “closet”.



**Figure 1: Contextualizing Common Ground**

## **Identifying Common Values: A Sticky Exercise**

The sticky exercise described below is part of the “DiversityDNA” toolkit created by Nadir Shirazi and other partners.<sup>1</sup> The exercise is both a software and it takes a physical form. In live workshops, use of the software can be omitted.

What you need:

- Chart paper you can stick on a wall
- Thick permanent markers
- Sticky notes (various colours optional)

How to conduct the sticky exercise:

1. Put up the chart paper on different parts of the walls of the room.
2. Ask the participants to generate a few statements that articulate different social values (especially those that there is disagreement about in Canadian society today). Write the different statements on each of the chart papers and

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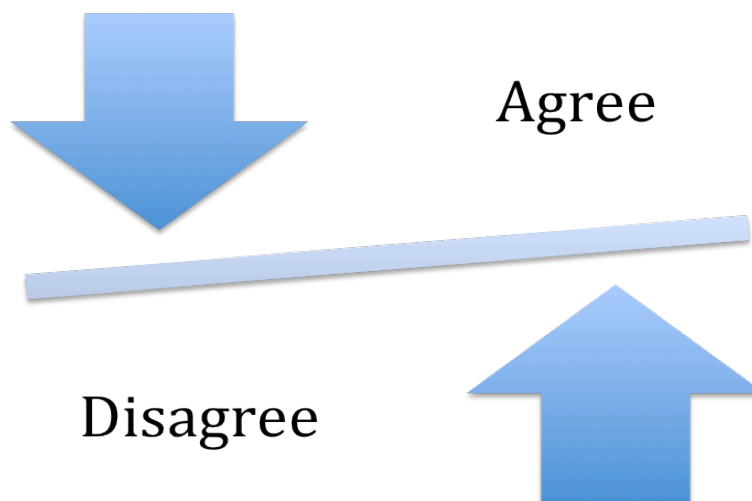
<sup>1</sup> [www.diversitydna.com](http://www.diversitydna.com)

then below it draw a line. At one end of the line, write “Agree” and at the other end of the line write “Disagree”.

3. Ask participants to put their sticky note anywhere on the line that they feel most comfortable.

Example:

## **MARRIAGE SHOULD BE LEGAL BETWEEN ANY TWO PEOPLE WHO LOVE EACH OTHER**



**Figure 2: Comparing Values**

This will enable participants to visually identify some of their views and enable comparison with views held by other participants. The sticky notes may be placed anywhere on the line or off the line to express the participants' own values with respect to the way the value statement on the chart paper is articulated. Participants are then asked to respond to the following three reflection questions:

1. How does it feel to share your personal views/thoughts/feelings with others?
2. Can you give an example of how differences or similarities uncovered by this exercise can lead to misunderstanding or group conflict?
3. Do personal values have a place in public life? Why or How?

## Civically Engaging Diversity: Taking Pragmatic Action

This part of the tool is designed to help young adults negotiate and navigate different and often difficult scenarios when it comes to civically engaging fellow youth and community members of diverse faiths and cultures.

Students will be presented with a scenario “decision tree” (illustrated below). The students will then be asked to generate the resulting decision tree paths.

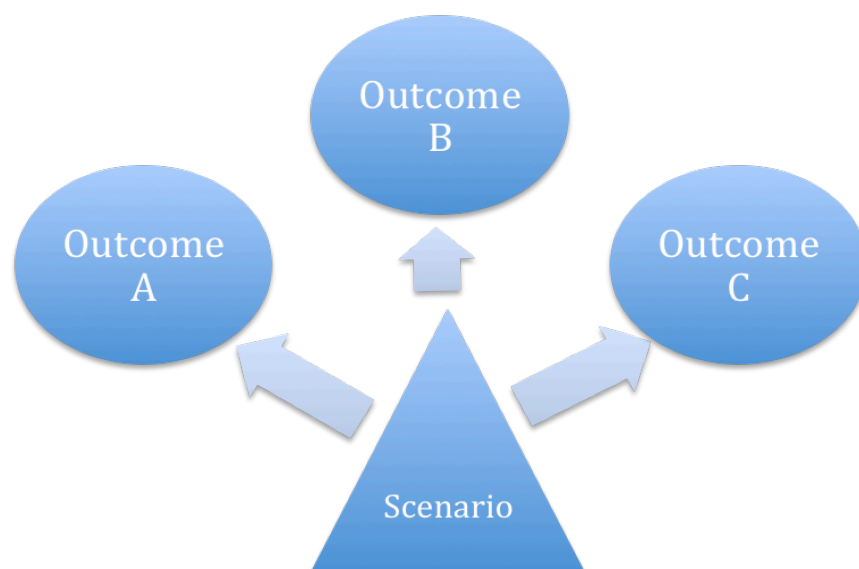
What you need:

- Chart paper you can stick on a wall
- Thick permanent markers (multi-coloured optional)

How to generate the decision trees:

1. Put up the chart paper on different parts of the walls of the room.
2. Split the participants up into small groups (ideally not more than 3 to a group).
3. Select as many of the scenarios from the list below as you have time for and write each one on a different chart paper.

Example:



**Figure 3: Negotiating Common Ground**

4. Ask each group to (a) identify the conflict(s) taking place in each scenario and (b) to come up with possible outcomes that can resolve the conflict(s) or overcome the challenge(s).

5. Ask each group to articulate the pros and cons of each of the possible outcomes they generate based on personal experience and share.

This user-generated work is a vital evaluation tool to demonstrate how participants translate their faith or cultural or personal values into civic values and how participants propose managing real life conflict.

Allow time for participants to address their own custom generated scenarios (2-3 or more depending on how much time the workshop allows).

## **SCENARIOS**

### Scenario 1

Due to a global conflict between people of different faiths or cultures, executive members of a campus or community group representing one of the faiths or cultures does not want to work on a local civic initiative with members of another campus or community group representing the other faith or culture.

### Scenario 2

The leaders of one group cannot figure out how to facilitate a multi-faith or cross-cultural dialogue with another group due to what some understand to be a deep theological difference or core difference in cultural values between those groups.

### Scenario 3

A multi-faith group wants to hold a community dialogue at a place of worship. When they approach the management of that place of worship they are informed that a condition for permission being given to them to use the place of worship for their dialogue is that males and females must separate.

### Scenario 4

Two individuals from different denominations or sects of a particular faith group threaten to derail an inter-faith community project because of their intra-faith differences.

### Scenario 5

When the multi-faith or cross-cultural group meets together they are energized, but when they take what they learned back their respective faith or cultural communities no one seems to care.

### Scenario 6

Members of a multi-faith community initiative are unsure how to proceed when approached by a cultural group to take part in their initiative.

### Scenario 7

A multi-faith community coalition's group members are unsure how to deal with an atheist or humanist group that expresses a desire to join the coalition.

### Scenario 8

After a successful multi-faith project the year before, the momentum is lost when new leadership emerges and has other priorities.

### Scenario 9

There is widespread enthusiasm following a planning meeting where a social action opportunity is proposed initially by a particular faith or cultural group. When members of other faith or cultural groups take the proposal back to their own faith or cultural group, executive members of those groups shoot the proposal down because they don't see how the social action opportunity aligns with their club's spiritual or cultural mission.

### Scenario 10

Certain religious or cultural community members have aversion to being part of a larger civic project because of the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) groups.

### Scenario 11

The multi-faith project team leader drops out of the project without warning due to "personal" commitments.



### Scenario 12

A project leader chooses to focus on his or her faith or cultural club's needs instead of the multi faith project they have previously committed to leading.

### Scenario 13

An opportunity to help one faith community arises, and the multi-faith group is unsure of how to proceed.

### Scenario 14

Despite the multi-faith group wanting to do action based projects members of their respective faith groups would rather have inter-faith debates, e.g. on theological or scriptural differences.

### Scenario 15

The multi-faith group is working well together, almost too well. Some volunteers or participants become concerned that the group has become an exclusive clique.

### Scenario 16

Some parents of students who work passionately on a multi-faith project become concerned that the project does not seem to be going anywhere, i.e. it does not seem to be yielding quantitative results. The parents ask the students to focus more attention on their academic work.

### **Create Your Own Scenario(s)**