

# I Believe in Respect

## Meeting the Intercultural Challenge in Schools: Respect for Faith and Diversity

### **I believe in respect.**

Have you ever really stopped to ask yourself what kind of world you want to live in? Does it include respect and faith?

Today's young people face many pressures — school, exams, clothes, friends. Studying and working hard in school can help them achieve good marks. But how do they work on fitting in?

We all just want to be accepted. We all want to be respected as individuals, with our own beliefs, opinions and dreams.

How can we help foster greater understanding?

### **Respect. Faith.**

Understanding and accepting people of different faiths and cultures can add greatly to our knowledge of the community — and world — in which we live. Help develop interfaith harmony! The more we listen, the more we learn... and the more we understand each other.

Most people are comfortable explaining their special customs and traditions. Share with each other your holidays and observances. Learn about unique symbols and beliefs. You may be surprised and intrigued to know the stories behind the traditions... and you may find out you have more in common than you know.

Think about how diverse beliefs and worldviews can help contribute to solving complex issues or suggest new approaches to everyday challenges. There is value in inviting many points of view!

### **The Project**

In 2004, the United Nations Association in Canada - Edmonton Branch together with its partners, [The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities](#), and the [Interfaith Centre for Education and Action](#), and through funding by [Canadian Heritage \(Government of Canada\)](#), developed a program called Meeting the Intercultural Challenge in Schools: Respect for Faith and Diversity. Teacher resources, lesson plans and guides were developed to offer easy ways to incorporate lessons of respect and inclusion into existing curricula.

## Media Coverage

### **From Niska News, Volume 8 Number 2, April 2005:**

**From left to right: The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Education; the Honourable Anne McLellan, Deputy Prime Minister; the Honourable Gary Mar, Minister of Community Development; Jim Logan, Edmonton Interfaith Centre; Dr. Chaldeans Mensah, a political scientist at Grant MacEwan College and project chair Stephanie Bishop, United Nations Association of Canada. The guest speakers brought greetings at the project launch for Meeting the Intercultural Challenge in Schools: Respect for Faith and Diversity.**

The Honourable Anne McLellan, the Honourable Gene Zwozdesky and the Honourable Gary Mar joined partners of the Meeting the Intercultural Challenge in Schools: Respect for Faith and Diversity initiative to launch a new awareness project called I Believe In Respect. Chair Stephanie Bishop (United Nations Association of Canada), Jim Logan (Edmonton Interfaith Centre), and Dr. Vicki Mather (The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities) represented the project steering committee at the launch, which was emceed by Dr. Chaldeans Mensah, a political scientist at Grant MacEwan College. Faith leaders, educators, community members and students joined dignitaries at the event on March 16, 2005, at Grant MacEwan College.

The purpose of the I Believe in Respect project is to encourage respect for faith and diversity in schools and communities. The project does not advocate for a particular faith. In fact, the objective is to encourage understanding of the different faiths of the world and to promote interfaith harmony.

The project website features resources for teachers, information for students and teachers, a lively multimedia production, and links to interfaith organizations. In addition, posters will be distributed to schools across the province.

“Schools are environments of enlightenment and learning,” comments steering committee chair Stephanie Bishop. “It’s an opportunity to enhance students’ understanding of other faiths, cultures and traditions.”

The materials promote messages of respect, acceptance, understanding and cooperation. “It all starts with awareness,” adds Stephanie. “Finding out more about each other helps to break down barriers and misconceptions.”

The project was initiated by the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities, the United Nations Association of Canada (Edmonton Branch), and the Interfaith Centre for Education and Action, through funding from the federal department of Canadian Heritage.