



Diversity Experts

Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education helps multicultural workplaces thrive



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Businesses and organizations from across Alberta are benefiting from an internationally recognized NorQuest College initiative to promote diversity in the workplace.

The college's Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education (CEIE) was launched in 2009 to create better tools and approaches to building culturally diverse workplaces that succeed and work. The CEIE's core expertise is in Intercultural Communication and English for the Workplace (EWP). The centre's research, training and train-the-trainer education builds capacity for two primary groups: newcomers to Canada and long-term Canadians.

Newcomers acquire skills to help them adapt and integrate into Canadian workplaces, communities and schools while long-term immigrants develop skills to lead, collaborate and interact with these diverse newcomer populations. It's a win-win for both groups, and employers across the province, said Todd Odgers, NorQuest's associate director for intercultural education.

"The centre is a unique entity with an expertise that organizations hiring diverse work populations are coming to recognize," Odgers said. "Not only are we helping with things like employee retention and promotion, we're also influencing the quality of work and innovation generated."

For companies like All Weather Windows, the positive impact of CEIE's work is clear.

CEIE has partnered with All Weather Windows to focus on building successful multicultural work teams and production lines. Managers and line workers, all from culturally diverse backgrounds, learn how culture and communication can positively influence team performance, work relations and bottom lines.

"Working with CEIE as partners and clients has been very rewarding," said Jason Fleming, All Weather Windows' training manager. "The combination of hands-on activities, theory and focused discussion has been second to none and fit our needs very well. Our supervisors have embraced program concepts and are already applying them on the plant floor."

This relationship has led to a current research project between CEIE, All Weather Windows and the University of Alberta that is expected to uncover practical lessons for working in and leading culturally diverse organizations that all provincial manufacturers can learn from.

ATCO Electric is also benefiting from its partnership



Staff at All Weather Windows

with NorQuest's Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education. In particular, CEIE helped develop a customized EWP program for more than 80 Philippine linemen working for ATCO Electric. The program is designed to assist the linemen in adapting more quickly to the ATCO way of doing things.

"The CEIE's Intercultural Communication and English for the Workplace program has provided us with a framework and resources for our staff to grow our intercultural interactions with one another," said Dave Beech, ATCO Electric's senior training specialist. "The centre's collaborative learning model has been practical for our workplace situation."

By transforming the workplace, the CEIE is in turn studying how we can define and transform our community.

In a recent project with the City of Edmonton, the centre embarked on training and coaching focused on what an "intercultural city" might look like. Participants investigated their roles in how to build Edmonton into an even more inclusive and dynamic city.

"The knowledge and resources of NorQuest's CEIE team provided me with the tools needed to effectively analyze, strategize and, most importantly, cope with the vexing dilemmas we face in the frontline work of building social infrastructure within communities," said Mike Chow, a consultant with the community development branch of the City of Edmonton's Community Services Department. "I would recommend any organization that has to work with diverse populations consider the resources offered by the Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education."

For more information about training and programs, contact NorQuest's English in the Workplace coordinator Darcy McDonald at darcy.mcdonald@norquest.ca and visit the CEIE website at www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural.