Bridging Culture, Nurturing Diversity: Cultural Exchange and Its Impact on Global Understanding

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of cultural exchange on global understanding and intercultural communication. It delves into the multifaceted dimensions of cultural exchange, cultural integration, and cultural continuity in fostering tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect among diverse communities worldwide.

The study also adopts a comparative approach, assessing Niger Delta Diasporan residents in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, and their ability to bridge culture. It employs literature review and archived documents to analyze how cultural exchange cultivates a more inclusive and harmonious global society. It investigates various forms of cultural exchanges, like educational programs, artistic collaborations, and intercultural festivals, to discern their specific impacts on individual and collective perceptions of diversity.

The study examines the challenges and potential pitfalls associated with cultural exchange, such as cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, highlighting the importance of respectful and reciprocal engagement. It advocates for inclusive practices that empower marginalized voices and promote authentic cultural understanding.

To underscore the vital role of cultural exchange in shaping a more inclusive, empathetic, and interconnected global community. As part of its mandate, the retreat, after a series of deliberations, recommended that governments and organizations invest in and promote cultural exchange programs that allow individuals to experience different cultures firsthand, like artist residencies and cultural festivals. In conclusion, the study advocates for continued promotion and support of diverse cultural interactions to bridge divides, dismantle stereotypes and cultivate a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of human experiences. By recognizing and celebrating our shared humanity, we pave the way for a more harmonious and prosperous future.

Keywords: Cultural Appropriateness, Cultural Continuity, Cultural Exchange, Cultural Integration, Global Community, Interconnectedness,

Introduction

The significance of fostering global understanding through cultural exchange cannot be overstated in an increasingly interconnected world. The exchange of ideas, traditions, and perspectives is a powerful tool for breaking down barriers and building bridges between diverse societies. This article delves into the profound impact of cultural exchange on shaping a more interconnected, tolerant, and empathetic global community (Chukwu et al., 2023).

Canada is winning the immigration game
Value per 1,000 persons, net migration as a share of total population

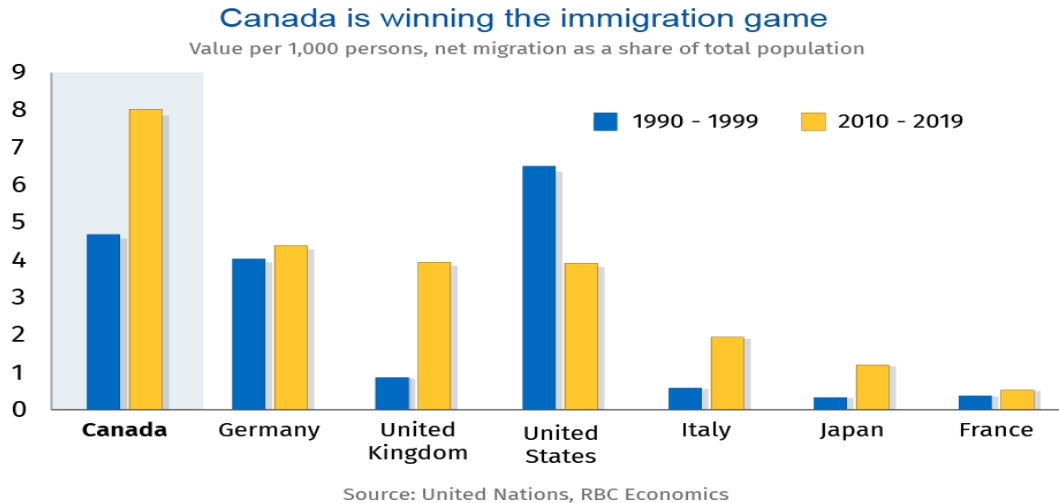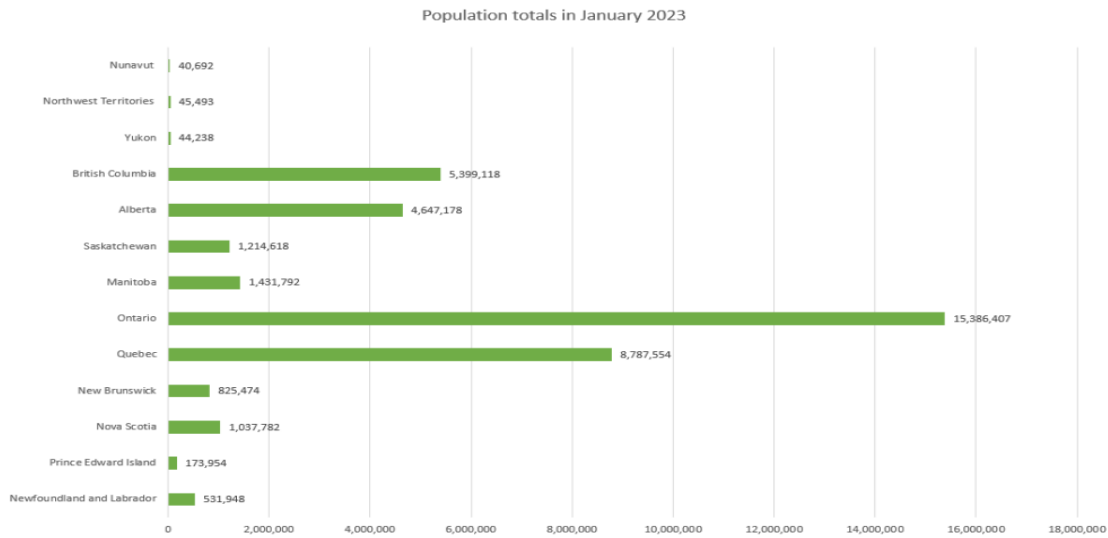Source: United Nations, RBC Economics

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Fig 1: Showing how Canada is winning the immigration game – Sourced from United Nations, RBC Economics

There is an increase in global migration around the world, and Canada has also witnessed a surge in immigrant numbers; according to Statistics Canada, Canada's population grew by more than one million in 2022, and Canada was the leading G7 country for population growth mainly due to the increase in immigration. In 2022, Canada welcomed 437,180 immigrants, with a net increase of 607,782 non-permanent residents (Lal, 2023). These figures represent the highest levels on record, reflecting high immigration targets and high numbers of immigration applications being processed. These statistics have varied implications for policymakers across a broad spectrum of society.

Population totals in January 2023

Province/Territory	Population
Nunavut	40,692
Northwest Territories	45,493
Yukon	44,238
British Columbia	5,399,118
Alberta	4,647,178
Saskatchewan	1,214,618
Manitoba	1,431,792
Ontario	15,386,407
Quebec	8,787,554
New Brunswick	825,474
Nova Scotia	1,037,782
Prince Edward Island	173,954
Newfoundland and Labrador	531,948

Canada's population grew by 1 million in 2022 | CTV News

Fig 1: Showing how Canada's population growth in 2022 – Sourced from CTV News

For this study, we shall limit it to the implications for cultural integration and continuity of new immigrants and existing societal structures. The Saskatoon Niger Delta Forum (SNDF)is one of such organizations at the forefront of bridging cultures, nurturing diversity through cultural exchange and its impact on global understanding. The SNDF has the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS), a not-for-profit organization located in Regina, Saskatchewan province, as one of its founders. It funds strategic initiatives and regional cultural councils. The SNDF has a membership strength of about 300, and most of them migrated from the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria to Canada within the last decade. SNDF organized its 2023 Annual retreat titled 'stepping out'. It invited an array of speakers from Ali Abukar, the CEO of Saskatoon Open Doors Society (SODS), to Michael Afenfia, a writer, Victor Amadin of the Royal Banks of Canada (both sons of Niger Delta) and Meka Okochi (the representative of the Executive Director of MCOS) to speak on the theme of the retreats. The President, Edward Agbai, in his welcome address, stated that;

"In an increasingly interconnected world, the significance of fostering global understanding through cultural exchange cannot be overstated. The exchange of ideas, traditions, and perspectives is a powerful tool for breaking down barriers and building bridges between diverse societies. This retreat delves into the profound impact of cultural integration and continuity on shaping a more interconnected, tolerant, and empathetic Saskatchewan community.

As I welcome you to today's retreat, let US make it the first of many and STEP OUT of our comfort zones to embrace opportunities in Saskatchewan and Canada through CULTURAL INTEGRATION AND CONTINUITY.

This study aims to understand how community-based organizations of immigrants are bridging cultures, nurturing diversity through cultural exchange, and its impact on global understanding using the SNDF lens.

Objective

To investigate the impact of cultural exchange on global understanding and identify strategies for bridging cultures and nurturing diversity.

Research Questions

1. What are the key benefits of cultural exchange programs on individuals' perceptions and understanding of different cultures?
2. How do cultural exchange programs contribute to breaking down stereotypes and fostering empathy among participants?
3. What challenges do cultural exchange programs face in achieving their objectives, and how can these be addressed?

Theoretical Framework

Bridging cultures and nurturing diversity can be approached through various theoretical frameworks. One common framework is Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC).

Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) refers to effectively communicating and interacting effectively communicating and interacting with people from different cultures. It involves understanding different cultural norms, values, beliefs, and communication styles and being able to adapt one's communication style accordingly. ICC is crucial in today's globalized world, where people from different cultures frequently interact in various settings such as business, education, and social environments. ICC emphasizes effectively communicating and interacting with people from different cultures. This framework suggests that individuals can develop skills to navigate cultural differences, such as cultural empathy, mindfulness, and adapting communication styles.

Another framework is Cultural Intelligence (CQ),

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is a concept that has gained significant attention in cross-cultural management, intercultural communication, and global leadership. It refers to an individual's ability to function effectively in culturally diverse settings. CQ goes beyond mere awareness of cultural differences; it involves the capability to adapt and manage effectively in various cultural contexts. It focuses on an individual's capability to function effectively across different cultural contexts. CQ comprises four components:

- meta-cognition (awareness of one's own cultural assumptions)
- cognition (knowledge of different cultures)
- motivation (interest and confidence in interacting with different cultures)
- behaviour (ability to adapt behaviour to different cultural contexts)

Cultural Intelligence is crucial in today's globalized world, where interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds are increasingly common. It helps individuals and organizations navigate complex cultural environments, build trust and rapport with people from diverse backgrounds, and achieve their goals effectively in multicultural settings.

Research has shown that Cultural Intelligence strongly predicts success in international assignments, cross-cultural negotiations, and multicultural team performance. As such, it is a

valuable skill for leaders, managers, and professionals working in diverse environments. These frameworks provide a theoretical foundation for understanding and addressing the challenges and opportunities of bridging cultures and nurturing diversity.

Table 1 –Comparing the four key components of Intercultural Communication Competence and Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Four Key Components	
Intercultural Communication Competence	**Cultural Intelligence (CQ)**
Cultural Awareness: This involves being aware of one's own cultural values and biases, as well as those of others. It includes recognizing cultural differences in communication styles, nonverbal cues, and social norms.	**CQ Drive:** This refers to an individual's motivation and interest in functioning effectively in diverse cultural settings. Individuals with a high CQ Drive are curious, eager to learn about different cultures, and are not afraid of unfamiliar situations.
Cultural Knowledge: Understanding the cultural practices, traditions, and values of different cultures is essential for effective intercultural communication. This includes knowledge of history, politics, religion, and other aspects of a culture.	**CQ Knowledge**: This component involves understanding cultural similarities and differences. It includes knowledge of cultural norms, values, traditions, and practices. Individuals with high CQ Knowledge are familiar with the cultural dimensions that influence behavior, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions.
Cultural Sensitivity: Being sensitive to the cultural differences and avoiding stereotypes or judgments based on cultural differences. It also involves respecting cultural diversity and being open-minded.	**CQ Strategy**: This component refers to an individual's ability to plan and adapt their behavior in cross-cultural interactions. It involves selecting appropriate behaviors and adjusting them according to the cultural context. Individuals with high CQ Strategy are flexible and can modify their approach based on the cultural context.
Communication Skills: Effective communication skills are crucial for ICC, including verbal and nonverbal communication, active listening, and empathy. Adapting one's communication style to the cultural context is important.	**CQ Action**: This component involves behaving in a culturally appropriate manner. It includes verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as other behaviors that are effective in diverse cultural settings. Individuals with high CQ Action can communicate effectively and build relationships across cultures.

Developing the theories of Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in bridging cultures and nurturing diversity that will impact cultural exchange (Normatova, 2024) and its impact on global understanding is essential for various reasons:
Improved Relationships: ICC and CQ can lead to more meaningful and positive relationships with people from different cultures, personally and professionally.
Effective Communication: ICC and CQ can help avoid misunderstandings and miscommunications arising from cultural differences, leading to more effective communication.
Enhanced Cultural Competence: Developing ICC and CQ can enhance one's overall cultural competence, which is increasingly important in our diverse world.
Global Opportunities: ICC and CQ are essential for success in global business and international collaborations and for navigating diverse social environments.
ICC and CQ are complex and dynamic processes involving ongoing learning, reflection, and adaptation. It is a valuable skill for individuals and organizations seeking to thrive in today's multicultural world.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is designed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between bridging culture and nurturing diversity: cultural exchange and its impact on global understanding (Liu et al., 2023). It consists of four critical components of two theories that collectively contribute to a holistic analysis. Firstly, a rigorous literature review forms the groundwork, encompassing academic journals, reports from international organizations, and regional studies (Snyder, 2019). This review establishes the historical context and delves into prior research and insights, providing a solid foundation for the study's findings.

Case studies are examined to provide context-specific insights. The study also adopts a comparative approach, assessing Niger Delta Diasporan residents in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, and their ability to bridge culture. This comparative lens helps identify both regional nuances and potential lessons to be gleaned from successful strategies elsewhere (Jiménez-Aceituno, 2020). Finally, the methodology includes a policy analysis, evaluating existing policies and legal frameworks to formulate recommendations for future policy development. Through this comprehensive methodology, the study aims to contribute a well-rounded and evidence-based perspective on bridging culture and nurturing diversity among diasporans in Canada.

This methodology aims to provide a holistic understanding of bridging culture, nurturing diversity towards achieving cultural exchange and its impact on global understanding, grounded on qualitative insights. This introduction sets the stage for a detailed exploration of the topic, outlining the issue's importance, the study's goals, and the methods used to achieve these goals.

Literature Review
Niger Delta Diasporan in Canada Supporting Initiatives in Niger Delta Region
Bringing the Niger Delta people to the middle and moving Nigeria forward requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that addresses the economic, social, and political challenges in the region (Normatova, 2024). The Niger Delta region has been historically

marginalized, facing issues such as environmental degradation, poverty, and a lack of basic infrastructure.

The Niger Delta Diasporan can encourage economic diversification beyond oil and gas. Invest in agriculture, manufacturing, and technology to create job opportunities. Improving infrastructure such as roads, schools, hospitals, and power supply stimulates economic growth and enhances overall quality of life.

To implement and enforce policies that address environmental degradation caused by oil exploration and exploitation. Support initiatives for environmental restoration and sustainable resource management. It will involve local communities in decision-making processes regarding resource extraction and development projects to ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed. It will also help to implement social programs that focus on education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation to improve the standard of living in the region.

To address security challenges in the region to create a stable environment for economic activities. This includes addressing issues related to militancy, piracy, and other forms of insecurity. Diasporans can engage in dialogue with community leaders and stakeholders to resolve conflicts peacefully and promote understanding (Sinatti, 2010; Martin, 2019). To Ensure that the Niger Delta region is adequately represented in political offices at all levels of government. This can help address the region's concerns through legislative and policy measures. It is essential to consider devolving more powers to local and state governments to allow for greater autonomy and decision-making capacity and investing in education and skills development programs to empower the youth in the region. A well-educated population is essential for sustainable development.

To create a conducive environment for private sector investments in the region. Public-private partnerships can be leveraged to accelerate development projects (Trebilcock & Rosenstock, 2015). It will involve reviewing and reforming policies related to resource allocation, revenue sharing, and fiscal federalism to ensure a fair distribution of resources. It's crucial to recognize that addressing the challenges in the Niger Delta requires collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities. Sustainable development efforts should be inclusive and participatory and consider the region's unique needs.

Niger Delta Diasporan Bridging Culture Gaps in Canada

The Niger Delta diaspora plays a significant role in bridging cultures in Canada, mainly through cultural exchanges, community initiatives, and academic contributions. As part of the larger Nigerian community in Canada, Niger Delta diasporans bring their unique cultural heritage, traditions, and perspectives, enriching the multicultural fabric of Canadian society.

Many Niger Delta diasporans actively participate in cultural events, festivals, and gatherings, showcasing their music, dance, food, and art, which helps to raise awareness and appreciation for the Niger Delta culture among Canadians. Additionally, they often organize cultural workshops, lectures, and exhibitions to educate the Canadian public about the history, traditions, and challenges faced by the Niger Delta region.

In academia, Niger Delta diasporans contribute to the understanding of Nigerian and African studies, offering valuable insights into the cultural, social, and political dynamics of the region. Their research and publications help to bridge the gap between Nigerian and Canadian academia, fostering greater cross-cultural understanding and collaboration (Wilson et al., 2020).

To bridge the cultural gap in their host communities, the Niger Delta Diasporans engage in intercultural communication, cultural exchange, and its impact on global understanding through their intercultural competencies that culminated in the November 2023 retreat held at the chapel of the Circle Drive Alliance Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada as organizing a summer picnic at the Victoria Park in Saskatoon.

Fig 3 – Poster of the 2023 SNDF Retreat titled 'Stepping Out'

Fig 4 – Executives and Guest Speaker at the 2023 SNDF Retreat

Intercultural Communication

In our increasingly interconnected world, understanding and navigating diverse cultural contexts is more important than ever. Intercultural communication, the exchange of information between people from different cultural backgrounds, is crucial in bridging cultures and nurturing diversity (Jackson, 2019). This article explores the significance of intercultural communication in today's globalized society.

Understanding Intercultural Communication: Intercultural communication is a complex process that involves the exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. It encompasses a wide range of communication styles, norms, and practices that vary across cultures. Understanding these differences is essential for effective communication and building positive cultural relationships.

Importance of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is crucial in today's globalized world, where people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact daily. It plays a vital role in fostering understanding, reducing conflicts, and promoting cooperation among individuals and communities. Effective intercultural communication can help bridge cultural gaps, increase empathy, and build trust between people from different cultures. Businesses, governments, and organizations need to succeed in a multicultural environment.

Fostering Mutual Understanding: Intercultural communication helps to promote mutual understanding and respect among people from different cultures. Individuals can avoid misunderstandings and conflicts by learning about and respecting cultural differences.

Enhancing Cultural Sensitivity: Intercultural communication enhances cultural sensitivity, allowing individuals to appreciate and value diverse perspectives. This leads to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Facilitating Globalization**:** In an increasingly globalized world, intercultural communication is essential for facilitating trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. It enables individuals and organizations to navigate cultural differences and work effectively across borders.

Promoting Innovation and Creativity: Diversity in thought and perspective, fostered through intercultural communication, promotes innovation and creativity. When individuals from different cultures collaborate, they bring unique ideas and approaches to problem-solving.

Building Stronger Relationships**:** Intercultural communication helps to build stronger relationships by fostering empathy, respect, and trust. It allows individuals to connect more deeply and build meaningful connections across cultures.

Strategies for Effective Intercultural Communication

Strategies	Adaptable Model for Communication
Cultural Sensitivity	Being aware of and respecting cultural differences is essential for effective intercultural communication. Avoiding stereotypes and assumptions can help to bridge cultural gaps.
Active Listening	Listening actively and empathetically is key to understanding others' perspectives. It involves paying attention to verbal and non-verbal cues and seeking clarification when necessary.

Adaptability	Being adaptable and flexible in communication style is crucial when interacting with individuals from different cultures. Being open to learning new cultural norms and practices can enhance communication effectiveness.
Patience and Tolerance	Cultural differences may lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. Practicing patience and tolerance can help to navigate these challenges and maintain positive relationships.
Cultural Awareness Training	Organizations can provide cultural awareness training to employees to improve their intercultural communication skills. These trainings can help individuals understand the impact of culture on communication and develop strategies for bridging cultural differences.

Cultural Exchange and Its Impact on Global Understanding

Cultural exchange refers to the interchange of ideas, beliefs, customs, traditions, values, and practices between individuals, societies, or nations. It is a process that has been occurring for centuries, facilitated by various means such as trade, migration, tourism, diplomacy, and technology. Cultural exchange is crucial in shaping global understanding by fostering empathy, promoting tolerance, and encouraging mutual respect among people from different cultural backgrounds. This article explores the significance of cultural exchange and its impact on global understanding.

Importance of Cultural Exchange

Cultural exchange refers to the sharing and blending of ideas, traditions, customs, beliefs, languages, and other aspects of culture between different societies and communities. This exchange has been a fundamental aspect of human interaction since ancient times, playing a crucial role in shaping the world we live in today. The importance of cultural exchange can be seen in various aspects of society, including social, economic, and political spheres.

Cultural exchange is essential as it helps individuals and societies broaden their perspectives and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world. It allows people to learn about different cultures, languages, and traditions, promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity. By exposing individuals to new ideas and ways of life, cultural exchange can challenge stereotypes and prejudices, leading to greater understanding and acceptance of diversity.

Fostering Understanding and Respect: Cultural exchange helps to break down stereotypes and prejudices by providing individuals with firsthand experiences of different cultures. This exposure promotes understanding, respect, and appreciation for the diversity of human expression, fostering a more inclusive and tolerant society.

Promoting Peace and Stability: By promoting understanding and empathy, cultural exchange can contribute to building peaceful and stable relationships between nations and communities. When people from different backgrounds come together and learn from each other, they are less likely to view each other as adversaries.

Preserving Cultural Heritage: Cultural exchange is vital in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Through interactions with people from different cultures, individuals can learn about and

appreciate the rich diversity of human traditions and practices, helping to ensure that these cultural treasures are passed down to future generations.

Stimulating Economic Growth: Cultural exchange can stimulate economic growth by promoting tourism, trade, and investment. People exposed to different cultures are more likely to travel to new destinations, buy products from different countries, and invest in international business opportunities.

Enhancing Creativity and Innovation: Exposure to different cultures can stimulate creativity and innovation by introducing individuals to new ways of thinking, problem-solving, and artistic expression. By blending ideas and practices from different cultures, people can create new art, music, literature, and technology forms.

Building Global Networks: Cultural exchange helps build global networks of individuals and organizations that can collaborate on various issues, from environmental conservation to public health. These networks facilitate sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices, leading to more effective solutions to global challenges.

Empowering Communities: Cultural exchange can empower marginalized communities by giving them a voice on the global stage. By sharing their culture with others, these communities can gain recognition and support for their traditions, languages, and ways of life.

Benefits of Cultural Exchange

Cultural Diplomacy - Cultural diplomacy refers to using cultural expressions and interactions to strengthen relationships between countries, promote mutual understanding, and achieve foreign policy goals. It involves cultural exchanges, art exhibitions, language programs, and cultural festivals. Cultural diplomacy can build trust and goodwill between nations, facilitate dialogue, and enhance a country's reputation abroad. It is seen as a soft power tool that complements traditional diplomacy by fostering people-to-people connections and transcending political differences.

One of the most significant impacts of cultural exchange is its role in cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy involves cultural exchange, arts, and education to promote understanding between nations and enhance their relationships. Through cultural exchange programs, countries can showcase their culture, heritage, and values, fostering goodwill and building bridges between people worldwide. Cultural diplomacy can reduce tensions, resolve conflicts, and promote peace by promoting dialogue and mutual respect.

Economic Impact - Cultural exchange can have a significant economic impact on societies. By promoting tourism, cultural exchange can boost local economies through increased spending on accommodation, food, transportation, and souvenirs. Additionally, cultural exchange can lead to exchanging ideas, technologies, and business practices, fostering innovation and economic growth. Moreover, cultural exchange can enhance international trade by promoting understanding and trust between nations, increasing trade volumes and economic cooperation. Overall, cultural exchange can be a catalyst for economic development and prosperity.

Cultural exchange also has a significant economic impact. It can stimulate tourism, trade, and investment by creating opportunities for cultural tourism, promoting cultural products and services, and facilitating cross-cultural business partnerships. By promoting cultural exchange,

countries can enhance their soft power and attract tourists, investors, and businesses, contributing to economic growth and development.

Educational Benefits - Cultural exchange programs offer numerous educational benefits, allowing participants to immerse themselves in different cultures, languages, and environments. These programs enhance cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and appreciation for diversity. Participants gain valuable insights into global issues, develop intercultural communication skills, and broaden their perspectives. Moreover, cultural exchange fosters personal growth, independence, and adaptability, essential skills in today's interconnected world.

Cultural exchange is also beneficial for education. It allows students to learn about different cultures firsthand, enhancing their cross-cultural communication skills and global awareness. Cultural exchange programs such as student exchanges, study abroad programs, and international collaborations can enrich the educational experience and help students develop a more nuanced understanding of the world.

Challenges of Cultural Exchange – blue mean good

While immensely rewarding, cultural exchange also presents several challenges that participants may face. These challenges can arise from differences in language, customs, social norms, and expectations. In language barriers, diasporan communication can be difficult when participants do not share a common language. This can lead to misunderstandings and frustration. The Niger Delta diasporans face cultural differentials as different cultures have varying norms regarding behaviour, etiquette, and social interactions. They may find navigating these differences challenging and inadvertently offending others. Their ability to adjust to new environments, climate, food, and living conditions can be challenging. They may experience homesickness and discomfort initially.

Niger Delta Diasporans feel social isolation, as they may feel isolated or lonely, especially if they have difficulty forming relationships with locals. They experience Miscommunication and Misunderstandings as differences in communication styles and non-verbal cues can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Most diasporans experience cultural shock because experiencing a new culture can be overwhelming, leading to feelings of disorientation and confusion.

The Niger Delta diaspora faces ethical Dilemmas and may encounter situations where their values or beliefs conflict with those of the host culture, leading to ethical dilemmas. These ethical dilemmas could lead to stereotyping and prejudice as they may encounter stereotypes or prejudice based on their nationality, race, or ethnicity, which can be hurtful and challenging to navigate. Such stereotyping and prejudices, if unchecked, could pose security concerns as they may face safety and security risks in unfamiliar environments, leading to anxiety and stress.

Despite these challenges, cultural exchange programs offer valuable learning experiences and opportunities for personal growth. Participants can overcome these challenges by being open-minded, patient, and respectful of the host culture and seeking support from program organizers and fellow participants.

While cultural exchange has many benefits, it also faces challenges. Cultural exchange can sometimes lead to cultural appropriation, where aspects of a culture are adopted without

understanding or respect for their significance. Additionally, cultural exchange can sometimes reinforce stereotypes or exoticize cultures, leading to misunderstandings or misrepresentations.

Summarizing the Major Aspects of Intercultural Competencies.

The knowledge, skills and abilities needed for intercultural competencies can be developed through training and developmental programs; they can be acquired through formal education, individualized coaching/mentorship programs, immersion programs and developmental assignments (Caligiuri, 2006). The competencies, knowledge, and skill set needed for leaders on an intercultural scale are to know the general culture of the country that is at the societal level, the specific cultural knowledge of the locality, that is, their values, norms, beliefs, rites, rituals and behaviour and the international business knowledge that relates to how businesses are conducted globally that covers areas such as international financing of businesses, international labour laws and labour relationships.

The skill set needed for intercultural competencies is the intercultural interaction skill, which includes foreign negotiation skills, conflict resolution, and learning of cultural nuances. Another skill set is the foreign language skill, which deals with the ability to learn foreign languages and be fluent, and finally, cognitive ability skill, which is the ability to deal with complexities in the workplace as well as having intuitive perceptual acuity to accurately perceive and interpret behaviours across multiple cultural contexts (Caligiuri, 2006)

Global leaders need to have some personality traits and characteristics suitable for the global work environment; these traits include extroversion (ability to have greater natural ease with others), agreeableness (ability to strive for mutual understanding and be less competitive), conscientiousness (the ability to demonstrate more significant effort and task commitment), emotional stability (ability to cope with stress in their working environment) and openness (the ability to assess the social environment correctly).

Promoting Cultural Awareness:

Cultural exchange is a two-way street that enables individuals to immerse themselves in the richness of other cultures. Participating in cultural exchange programs gives people firsthand experience and understanding of the customs, traditions, and values that shape different societies. This exposure fosters cultural awareness, dispelling stereotypes and misconceptions that often arise from ignorance. The SNDF members are interested in the cultural integration of the greater Saskatchewan community while ensuring that there is cultural continuity in their home culture. The way the SNDF members are engaging in cultural continuity is through their food. The food that the SNDF promotes are Plantain Pepper Soup, Yam Pepper Soup, Egusi Soup and Eba, Black Soup and Eba, and Ogbono Soup and Eba. Otehrs are Starch and Banga Soup, Afang Soup and Eba, Fisherman's Soup and Eba and Nigerian Jollof Rice. They also engage in cultural continuity through their dress styles that array the various unique tribes in the Niger Delta region.

Fig 5 – Array of Participants at the 2023 SNDF Retreat

Enhancing Interpersonal Communication: Effective communication is at the heart of any successful interaction. Cultural exchange facilitates the development of strong interpersonal skills by exposing individuals to diverse communication styles and norms. Through direct engagement, people learn to navigate linguistic and cultural differences, laying the groundwork for more effective global communication.

Building Cross-Cultural Empathy: Empathy is a fundamental aspect of bridging cultural gaps. Cultural exchange provides individuals with the opportunity to step into the shoes of others and experience their joys, challenges, and aspirations. This firsthand exposure builds cross-cultural empathy, breaking down barriers rooted in prejudice and fostering a sense of shared humanity.

Stimulating Innovation and Creativity: Diverse perspectives catalyze innovation and creativity. Cultural exchange brings together individuals with varied backgrounds and experiences, creating a melting pot of ideas. Exposure to different ways of thinking encourages innovative problem-solving and fosters an environment where creativity flourishes.

Global Citizenship: Cultural exchange cultivates a sense of global citizenship by instilling a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of our world. Individuals who engage in cultural exchange often develop a broader worldview, understanding that the challenges and opportunities faced by one part of the world can have far-reaching effects on others.

Fostering Peace and Tolerance: Cultural exchange is crucial in promoting peace and tolerance. Fostering mutual respect and understanding diminishes the seeds of conflict rooted in cultural misunderstandings. Building connections across borders creates a foundation for diplomatic efforts and international cooperation.

Educational Impact: Incorporating cultural exchange into educational curricula enhances the learning experience. Exposure to different cultures broadens students' perspectives and prepares them to navigate an increasingly diverse and globalized world. Educational institutions are pivotal in shaping future generations with a mindset geared toward inclusivity and understanding.

Policy Recommendations

After a series of deliberations, the retreat made the following policy recommendations as part of its mandate.

Promotion of Cultural Exchange Programs: In session, the SNDF urged governments and organizations to invest in and promote cultural exchange programs that allow individuals to experience different cultures firsthand. This could include artist residencies and cultural festivals.

Support for Multicultural Education: The SNDF members advocated for an education system incorporating multicultural education into their curricula to promote understanding and respect for diverse cultures. This could include teaching about different cultures' histories, traditions, and values.

Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue: Platforms for intercultural dialogue should be created to facilitate conversations between people from different cultures, fostering mutual understanding and respect.

Inclusion and Diversity in Media: Media should strive to be inclusive and diverse, representing a wide range of cultures accurately and respectfully.

Support for Minority and Indigenous Cultures: Efforts should be made to support and protect minority and indigenous cultures, recognizing their unique contributions to global diversity.

Research and Evaluation: Continued research and evaluation should be conducted to assess the impact of cultural exchange programs on global understanding and identify improvement areas.

International Cooperation: Countries should work together to promote cultural exchange and understanding on a global scale, recognizing that cultural diversity is a source of strength and enrichment for all societies.

Conclusion

Cultural exchange emerges as a powerful force for unity and understanding in a world marked by diversity. By breaking down cultural barriers, fostering empathy, and promoting open dialogue, cultural exchange lays the groundwork for a more interconnected and harmonious global society. Embracing the richness of cultural diversity is not just a choice but a necessity for a sustainable and peaceful future. As we continue to bridge cultures, we nurture diversity and contribute to the collective tapestry of human experience.

Intercultural communication is vital in bridging cultures and nurturing diversity in today's globalized world. By understanding and respecting cultural differences, individuals can build stronger relationships, promote mutual understanding, and foster a more inclusive society. Embracing intercultural communication is essential for building a more harmonious and interconnected world.

Cultural exchange promotes global understanding by fostering empathy, tolerance, and mutual respect among people from different cultural backgrounds. It is a powerful force for positive change in the world. Understanding, respecting, and appreciating cultural diversity can

help build a more peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous global society. Individuals, societies, and nations must engage in cultural exchange to broaden their perspectives, challenge stereotypes, and promote peace and understanding in an increasingly interconnected world. Promoting cultural exchange can build a more inclusive and harmonious global community.

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