

Cultural Awareness – differences that may impact behaviours, expectations, or practices in school learning environments.

As we learn about other cultures we need to be sensitive to the fact that not all people from a particular culture or society behave in the same way. Just as regions and peoples within Canada manifest a variety of cultures and social behaviour, even though we share many common characteristics, so there are regional and cultural variations among people from other nations.

Behaviours, expectations, or practices that are common in BC school learning environments may be perceived differently in other cultures.
Praise is expressed overtly/and is welcome.	Praise is experienced as embarrassing.
Making direct eye contact is appropriate/expected.	Making direct eye contact is inappropriate/may be seen as rude.
Physical contact between peers and between teachers and students is unexceptional, particularly in working with younger children.	Physical contact between individuals is taboo, particularly physical contact between males and females.
The polite or acceptable physical distance between individuals is 40-70 cm.	Physical distance is either much closer or much further apart.
Silence is never prolonged; an instant answer is expected.	Silence is comfortable and can imply thought.
Most feelings may be displayed but not necessarily acted upon.	Feelings must be hidden, or, in other cases, displayed with gusto.
Some personal topics can be discussed openly.	Taboo topics are highly variable and culturally defined.
Punctuality is prized.	Time is flexible.
Relative status is not emphasized.	Status is very important.
Roles are loosely defined.	Role expectations are strict.
Competition is desirable.	Group harmony is desired.
Politeness is routine; lapses occur and are forgiven. Thank you is enough.	Politeness and proper conduct are paramount, especially in children.
Education is for everyone.	Education is for primarily or for males first.
Girls and boys are educated together.	Girls and boys are educated separately.

Source: "Settlement Workers in Schools Module on Cross-Cultural Communication," British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, p. 12.