

Diversity in Civic Engagement

Greater diversity in civic participation is an indicator of successful social inclusion in communities.

As our communities grow and change, it is important to ensure that local decisions are reflective of community diversity.



Civic engagement is one of the defining democratic freedoms in our society. It allows us, as residents, to have a say in the community in which we live. Civic engagement encompasses much more than just casting a ballot on election day. It includes a wide range of ways to participate in the community; such as becoming involved in neighbourhood issues, as well as direct participation in local politics. Because we live in communities comprised of considerable diversity, it is important to include members of all backgrounds and develop processes that are more representative of the community.

As ethno-cultural diversity in our communities continues to grow, it is essential that all people can access civic information. Language should not pose a barrier to obtaining information about the governance system, local community matters, and candidates. The translation of key civic materials and would be an effective and efficient way of increasing access to municipal information.

One concern that has been raised among ethno-cultural groups is the tendency of some

politicians to court a particular group for their support for election day, after which, the attention subsides or disappears completely. It is important that the participation of ethno-cultural groups is regarded as meaningful and welcomed.

There is also the issue regarding politicians of a particular ethno-cultural background, courting voters of the same background. It is wrong and

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naive to assume that such candidates can secure the votes of the same group, simply because they are of the same ethno-cultural group. This assumption is based on broad generalizations of race and ethnicity, coupled with the idea that ethno-cultural groups are homogenous which in reality, is usually not the case.

A number of communities have also identified low civic engagement and low voter turnout among youth as a concern. The “Get Your Vote On” campaign across BC has been integral in encouraging youth votership. Some groups even advocate for lowering the voting age to 16 in order to encourage greater participation among youth.

Ethnicity and age are just two issues affecting voter and civic inclusiveness. Communities that are successful in reaching out to a diverse range of people, experience increased social inclusion and a more well rounded representation of those that live within the community, as well as their interests and concerns. Civic participation across diverse communities is an important contributing factor to developing healthy communities for all members. Because local governments are closest to their communities, they have the opportunity to seek input from their community in unique ways. Local governments can approach cultural organizations and dialogue about how they can create engagement materials together. Local governments can create city-wide events or kitchen table talks that draw cross-cultural participation and work with multicultural media on a long-term partnerships to provide civic information to their audiences. Municipalities could also use multilingual websites to encourage dialogue and allow for comments and questions to be posted to increase participation among diverse voices.



How will you ensure marginalized people are included in public processes?

What are you doing to connect with young voters?

How are you reaching out to different cultural groups?

For More Information:

Inclusive Cities Canada
www.inclusivecities.ca

Get Your Vote On
www.GetYourVoteOn.ca

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies
and Service Agencies of BC
www.amssa.org