

The Ekota School Project

By

Indo-Canadian Women Association (ICWA)

Project & Evaluation Report

**Stressors Through Canadian History: Working Towards a Culture of Peace and
Harmony**

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Abstract

Objectives: This paper provides a project and evaluation report on the Ekota School Project. The Ekota School Project was implemented as a collaborative partnership between Indo-Canadian Women's Association (ICWA) and Ekota Elementary School. The main objective of the project was to expand grade 5 students' understanding of issues related to diversity; inclusion; cultural competence; equality of opportunity; as well as the building of peaceful, harmonious, and just communities. These issues were explored in relation to three main topics found in the grade 5 social studies curriculum, examining their application in the children's lives, namely (i) Canada's historical immigration experiences (ii) the two World Wars, the Famous Five, and the Great Depression, (iii) and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Methods: The Ekota school project employed a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. The main components of the project were (i) in-class discussions on topic areas, (ii) letters written to grandparents, and (iii) take home assignments that facilitated family discussions regarding the different topics learnt in class.

Results and conclusions: Overall, findings from this evaluation indicate that even though there are some areas that require improvement in terms of implementation processes, the *Ekota School* project managed to meet its objective of expanding student's knowledge in the three main topic areas mentioned above. As well, students had opportunity to reflect on how they might build peace and harmony at home, school, and in their communities. This project also raised awareness on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion at the family-level as students had opportunity to take learnings home.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Description *(Provide a brief description of the program, summarizing its intended purpose, highlighting distinctive attributes)*

The Ekota School project was a collaborative partnership between Indo-Canadian Women's Association (ICWA) and Ekota Elementary School in Edmonton, Alberta and was implemented from May-to-June of 2018. This project sought to expand (grade 5) students' knowledge and understanding of Canadian History in three topic areas related to the grade five (5) curriculum, namely:

- (i) Canada's historical immigrant experiences, looking at the trajectory of immigration to Canada and the reasons for immigration since the 1500s to present;
- (ii) World-wars, the depression, and the famous five, and;
- (iii) The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This project used a gender-based perspective to examine the different topic areas. Students reflected on these topic areas in the context of their lived experiences at home, at school, and in their communities of belonging. In addition, the project sought to teach students how to build a culture of harmony and peace despite the many challenges that society might experience at different points in time. One way that students did this was to examine the lived experiences of their parents, grandparents, and other key historical figures; looking at how these older generations contributed to a culture of peace and harmony that we enjoy in present-day society. Because of the focus on peace and harmony, the topic areas were titled, "*Stressors Through Canadian History: Working Towards a Culture of Harmony and Peace.*"

1.2 History and Background *(how the project came about)*

During one of the discussions between ICWA, community members, and MLA Rod Loyola, about how to develop a more peaceful and harmonious society, there was realization that most of the existing programs related to this topic engaged the adult population. Very few programs involved youth, and none engaged children. Children are in the concept forming stage of life and it was felt that they should be supported to explore the concepts peace and harmony, how it should feel to live in a peaceful and harmonious society, and what they can do to create such a society. This would lay a solid foundation for this generation to be able to critically analyze and develop constructive behaviours in favour of developing a peaceful and harmonious society.

Once the basic concept and the target population were identified, a school (Ekota Elementary) was approached to be a possible collaborator on this project and begin implementation of the pilot program to a selected group of students. The school's identification was based on the following factors:

- the school (principal) bought into the concept, was very supportive and willing to assist in the development of appropriate delivery modules and to create the opportunity for the delivery of the program.
- The school has a culturally diverse population with high number of new immigrants.

A committee of representatives from ICWA and Ekota School was formed to work on the development of an effective program. The committee worked extensively for over a year and developed a program to be delivered to grade 5 students, that was submerged in the existing curriculum. ICWA did not receive any grants or funding to implement this program and had to rely on volunteer hours. The time spent by

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the school staff and the staff of ICWA, in the development and delivery of the program involved over 600 hours of volunteer time through ICWA.

1.3 Rationale and Justification *(why this project is important)*

Canada has always been a diverse society (in terms of ethnicity and different cultural backgrounds), beginning in the early 1500s with the immigration of early settlers to Canada. As such, human diversity has always existed in Canada based on age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnic differences, culture, immigration status, religious orientation, abilities, sexual orientation, etc. Despite these differences, there are a lot of similarities among human-beings and misunderstanding of these differences can create divides that can have detrimental effects on individuals, families, and communities. History teaches us of the many atrocities that were committed in the name of difference. Even when well-intentioned, misunderstanding of difference creates frustrations and present challenges that make certain groups excluded from fully participating in the social, economic, cultural, and political aspects of their communities. As a society, it is important to learn and understand our similarities and differences, to find constructive ways to bridge these differences to create inclusive societies and address disparities in health and well-being. Thus Middleton (2003) argues that:

Perceiving difference always bears the potential for prejudice and discrimination. Perceiving commonality bears the potential for inclusion and understanding. But it is sometimes hard to find out commonality when we seem so vastly different (p.65)

The Ekota project is significant in that it recognizes that social differences exist and aims to raise student's awareness regarding these differences and the importance of building harmonious, peaceful, and just societies; societies that are inclusive and culturally competent. The project also recognizes that if not well understood, differences can create challenges for individuals, communities, and society. Thus, Middleton (2003) states:

In part, our problems in coping with issues of human diversity stem from simple misinformation, misunderstanding, and ignorant speculation about the meaning of physical and cultural differences (p.1).

Research shows that it is important to talk about issues of diversity and inclusion with children, so that they can become empowered in their early years as this is a critical time that children build their value systems. The Ekota school project recognizes that children are active agents who can play a significant role in building harmonious, inclusive and culturally competent communities if given the opportunity. Through this project, students have a chance to practice what they learn in school, which makes a huge difference in fighting against issues caused by physical, social, and cultural difference, for example bullying in schools. As students learn about these issues at school, they take their learnings home and discuss with their parents, siblings, and friends. Students also get to understand who they are and that even though there are differences, human beings are all the same. Thus, Middleton comments, "It is important to understand our differences and embrace our commonalities and use these to bridge our differences."

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1.4 Definition of Key Terms

Diversity: Middleton (2003), defines human diversity as both biological and physical variations and their significance in various natural and social environments around the world” (p. 3). Diversity can also be defined as differences between people either real or perceived.

Peace: is freedom from any form of disturbance. The presence of tranquility or calmness.

Harmony: is a relationship in which various components exist together without destroying one another. This relationship is characterized by a lack of conflict or by agreement, as of opinion or interest. For example, when people live peacefully in a community and don't fight. They let each other do what they need to do without conflict.

Justice: when all are treated well and with fairness.

Inclusion: is the provision of certain rights to all individuals and groups in society, such as employment, adequate housing, health care, education and training, etc. It is about addressing power imbalances and removing barriers that put certain populations at a disadvantage in attaining well-being and having quality of life. As well, inclusion is also about creating an environment where individuals, families, and communities can fully participate and make meaningful contributions in the social, political, cultural, and economic spheres in the communities in which they live, regardless social or physical differences (perceived or real). This is done through creating equality of opportunity for all based on need and removing barriers to ensure equal opportunity and outcomes.

SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Project Design

The Ekota school project employed a mixed methods study design, as it used both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. Participants (students, teachers, and parents), filled out individual evaluation questionnaires, providing feedback regarding students' learnings and experiences in taking part in this project. The questionnaires collected quantitative data and had a few open-ended questions that provided qualitative data. Students also wrote some letters to their grandmothers, which provided additional qualitative data. A mixed methods design provides a more holistic understanding of participants' views and learnings regarding the different topic areas as qualitative and quantitative methods inform each other. The quantitative piece provides descriptive data, while the qualitative piece provides contextual information. Using multiple methods of data collection and analysis will also help document evidence of unexpected or unanticipated impacts.

2.2 Recruitment

The office of the MLA of Alberta for Edmonton-Meadowlark, Mr. Rod Loyola, assisted with the recruitment of Ekota Elementary School. When Ekota Elementary School agreed to participate in the project they partnered with Indo-Canadian women in implementing this project in their school. It took a year to work out the details of the partnership and arrange the logistics for program implementation

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(from September 2015- September 2016). Once the partnership was established and the logistics and terms of reference developed, different strategies were used to recruit participants which include:

- a leaflet detailing the project was provided to possible participants on the Ekota Fun Night.
- a video detailing the nature of the project was produced and shared with parents on fun night or via the school website, and
- a presentation about the project was done at a community barbeque hosted by the school.

Thirty (30) grade five (5) students at Ekota Elementary School, in the 2017/2018 school year, participated in this project. This sample includes both male and female students and their ages ranged from 9-11 years old. All participating students were expected to take home some discussion points to discuss with their families; presumably all families of participating students took part in the family discussion component of the project. Three teachers from Ekota school were actively involved in this project as observers and provided feedback on the content of the workshops. Two facilitators from Indo-Canadian Women’s Association facilitated the workshop discussions. The two facilitators also brought in some youth guest presenters to help facilitate some of the topics.

2.3 Project Content and Delivery

The Ekota school project had three main components to achieve stated objectives and outcomes namely, (i) in-class sessions that were delivered in three forty-five (45) minute to one-hour (1) workshops in the winter term of 2018, when syllabus coverage matched the delivery of the material; (ii) the students wrote some letters to their grandmothers updating/informing them about what was happening in their world, and; (iii) a homework assignment where students took some questions home to discuss with their families. The three components of the project focused on the three main topics, which include:

- (i) Canada’s historical immigrant experiences looking at the trajectory of immigration to Canada and the reasons for immigration since 1500s to present;
- (ii) World-wars, the depression, and the famous five, and;
- (iii) The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Below we present the three different topic areas and how these were presented in relation to the content that was discussed in each topic, expected learning outcomes (general and specific), key performance indicators, and methodology.

Presentation # 1: Immigration and its social implications	
Content:	Continuum Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why immigrants have chosen Canada as their home and why Canada welcomes and needs immigrants? • What challenges do immigrants face in a new country and the social implications of those challenges? • What can we help to smoothen out these stressors caused by this change?

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General Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will develop a general understanding of immigration and who among us are immigrants and develop an understanding of the status of immigrants in Canada in a broader sense.
Specific Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will learn about various immigrant group line-up since Canada became a country and about general and specific contributions of immigrants.
Indicators (growth in learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are we all immigrants? What are the differences among us and what is the importance of this mix in a population? What are the similarities and differences between settlers and immigrants? Formation of Canada as a country and contributions a of immigrants towards this country that we call our home.
Methodology	<p>Chart depicting flow of immigrants since the 1500's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of 5 interviews among immigrant families detailing family formation 5 students sharing their family history and experiences with the class. Group discussions related to challenges caused by variances in food and culture, language, understand, understanding of social interaction, weather adaptability and understanding of gender roles. Presentations <p>Take home questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do we have any stories or examples of when we weren't made to feel welcome or didn't feel like we belonged? (Could be a current event or what parents or grandparents went through). What positive measures did we take to deal with this? Have we done it to anyone else? What would it look like if we helped someone feel welcome, or helped someone belong? Should this be everyone's responsibility?
Presentation # 2: The effects of the great depression and the world wars on Canadians	
Content	<p>Continuum of Learning: Students will learn the connection between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The social structure of Canada before World War 1 How social disasters like the Great Depression and World Wars affected the lives of the people. How youth can participate in avoiding future violence and growth towards having a peaceful community.
General Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students will learn the underlying factors that hamper harmony and explore how harmony and peace can be achieved.
Specific Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students will learn what role men and women played during he two world wars and the depression years.
Indicators (growth in learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How stressors affect individuals differently and outline ways individual's respond to stress. Mediation skills when resolving conflicts, e..g. recognize feelings of others , allow others to express opinions. Respectful communication strategies that foster group/team development, e.g. encourage participation of all group members.
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topics will be presented via letters from a grandmother to her grandchildren, bringing out clearly the social situation at that time and its implications on the Canadians. Group discussion leading to participants to identify the ways in which the communities can grow and benefit in the absence of violence. Pictures and topics to highlight the main ideas will be presented in a booklet to the students.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open discussion on provided topics <p>Home assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just like positive and negative things can come out of wars between countries, has our families had disputes with others that have had either positive or negative outcomes? Looking back, is there anything we would have done differently? What did we do right? • The great depression meant economic hardships for many families...how has our family (past and current) dealt with financial hardships? What stressors did we face and what strategies did we employ for dealing with this change? • Questions directed to mom, auntie, grandma, or any other female member of the family-the famous five fought for the rights of women and they did make a difference but was it enough of a difference? Do you have any stories of inequality as a woman? How did you or do you handle these concerns? If you were a current member of the famous 5, what would you fight for now?
Presentation # 3: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms	
Content	<p>Continuum of Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the need for constant social change to match our socio-political situation and the population mix (reference to immigration, World War 1, 2 and Depression). • Identify social inequalities in opportunities, roles, movement, earning etc. • What can I do to move towards equality and mutual respect in our day to day life?
General Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will develop general understanding why we need the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and what it entails.
Specific Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social implications of the Canadian Charter of rights and freedoms in the current context. Focus on fundamental rights, equality rights, aboriginal rights. • Our individual role in better implementation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. • Where do we go from here?
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual rights under the charter of rights and freedoms • Co-relation between our rights and the rights of charter • Co-relation between rights and responsibilities
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline Chart • Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms- video presentation • Group discussions • Presentations

SECTION 3: EVALUATION

3.1 Introduction to the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to examine the effectiveness of the Ekota school project in meeting its goals and objectives. The main objective of the Ekota school project was to expand (grade 5) students' knowledge and understanding of Canadian History. The project also sought to teach students how to build a culture of harmony and peace despite the many challenges that society might experience. The project was based on three topic areas related to the grade 5 curriculum, which include,

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- (i) Canada's historical immigrant experiences, looking at the trajectory of immigration to Canada and the reasons for immigration since the 1500s to present,
- (ii) World-wars, the depression, and the famous five, and
- (iii) The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As mentioned above, in the introduction section, for this project, the three topic areas were titled, "*Stressors Through Canadian History: Working Towards a Culture of Harmony and Peace.*"

3.2 Benefits

The results of this evaluation will benefit major stakeholders (ICWA and Ekota Elementary school) in different but significant ways. ICWA will benefit by expanding and advancing its organizational mandate and in meeting program goals and objectives. Indo-Canadian Women's Association has worked towards building inclusive and harmonious communities through its work with immigrant and refugee communities. However, most of this work has been with adult populations. The Ekota school project provides ICWA with an opportunity to expand its work on diversity and inclusion by working with school-aged children.

Ekota Elementary School, and other schools that will participate in future projects, will benefit from this project by providing more opportunities for students to learn about these important topics, thereby reinforcing students learning experiences. Having guest speakers (community members) come in and share their lived experiences stresses the importance of these social studies topics related to immigration and settlement, gender, social justice, and equity in health and wellbeing. As well, students have an opportunity to gain a different perspective on these topic areas as they hear from people with the lived experience, and they can see the application of these issues in everyday life. Learning about building peaceful, harmonious, and just communities will also conscientize students to play an active role in creating and promoting peaceful school communities. This might curb on bullying in schools as students build capacity to deal with some of the emotional and behavioral challenges that they experience in schools. Through participating in this project, children learn to identify how social unrest disrupts social life and to identify the steps they can take as individuals as well as a community to build a more peaceful society.

The Ekota school project has potential to benefit the community at large in understanding issues brought about by failure to accept diversity. As children learn about the importance of building harmonious and peaceful communities, they take these lessons home and share learnings with family, friends, and their communities. As well, children are the future leaders of tomorrow; therefore, the Ekota school project prepares these children to be leaders that respect diversity and thrive for an inclusive and just society. This has potential to create a culture of peace and harmony on a larger scale.

3.3 Measurement (data-collection)

Trochim & Donnelley (2003) define measurement as "the process of observing and recording the observations that are collected as part of a research or [evaluation] project" (p. 56). This evaluation employed both qualitative and quantitative measures to get a more nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of the "Ekota School Project" in meeting its goals and objectives. As mentioned above in

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the section on methodology, this evaluation is informed by data from several sources. Students, parents, and teachers had opportunity to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the program in relation to stated goals and objectives. This information was collected at different points during the project. The use of data from several sources allows us to provide a more comprehensive view regarding the outcomes of the Ekota school project in the short- and-long-term.

The total number of students that filled out individual evaluation forms was twenty-six (26). This sample included both female and male students aged between the ages of 9 and 11 years. Students completed a questionnaire at the end of the project, to assess resulting change in learning and/or thought process. The students' questionnaire was mostly quantitative with a few open-ended questions providing qualitative data. The students also wrote some letters to their grandmothers updating them about current events in present day society, providing more qualitative data.

Six parents completed the individual parent evaluation forms and three teachers completed the individual teacher evaluation forms at the end of the project. The two facilitators that facilitated the workshop (from Indo Canadian Women's Association) also provided informal feedback regarding the different processes they engaged in as well as their perceptions regarding the outcomes of the project. Each questionnaire (student, parent, and teacher) had separate evaluation questions which will be discussed below in the findings section. The evaluation questions sought to examine deepened understanding in relation to the three topics under study namely, (i) immigration, (ii) the great depression World War I & II, and the Famous Five (iii) and, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was based on the principles and practice of community-based research and evaluation, whereby the evaluator works together with the intended beneficiaries of the program (participatory evaluation). Content analysis was used for qualitative data and descriptive statistics were used for quantitative data analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative data examined each evaluation question (students, parents, and teachers) and then drew up themes across individual responses. Analysis across the different responses also sought to find the social significance of qualitative responses in the context of peace and harmony at the individual, family, and societal level.

SECTION 4: FINDINGS

In this section, we present findings from the Ekota school project. As mentioned above, findings are informed by data from several sources (students' questionnaires; parents' questionnaires; teacher questionnaires, and feedback from facilitators). We begin by providing feedback on students' responses, followed by parents' responses, and then teachers' responses.

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4.1 Student Evaluations

Students completed individual evaluation questionnaires at the end of the workshops (all three sessions) to assess resulting change in perception and/or thought process regarding the three topic areas that guide this project. The students' questionnaire was mostly quantitative, and responses were provided on a five (5) point Likert scale with 1 indicating not at all and 5 indicating definitely. **Table 2** shows the student quantitative questionnaire, which highlights the evaluation questions that the students responded to. This questionnaire had one open-ended question that provided qualitative data. Students also wrote letters to their grandparents and these provide qualitative data.

Table 2: Student Questionnaire

The session made you question your behavior and how you might change	1 Not at all	2 Slightly	3 Somewhat	4 Mostly	5 Definitely	Total
Session 1-Immigration	5 20%	8 32%	8 32%	1 4%	3 12%	n= 25
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II	2 8%	5 20%	13 52%	3 12%	2 8%	n=25
Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms	4 15%	3 12%	6 23%	7 27%	6 23%	n=26
You felt that the presentations were interesting and kept your attention:						
Session 1-Immigration	3 12%	5 19%	6 23%	5 19%	7 27%	n=26
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II	1 4%	4 15%	7 27%	5 19%	9 35%	n=26
Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms	1 4%	3 12%	6 23%	7 27%	9 35%	n=26
You learned something new from the session:						
Session 1-Immigration		1 4%	7 28%	6 24%	11 44%	n=25
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II	2 8%	1 4%	5 19%	5 19%	13 50%	n=26

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Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms	1 4%		2 8%	5 19%	18 69%	n=26
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Quantitative Findings (students survey)

First, we present quantitative findings in relation to the first three questions asked in the student questionnaire.

Question # 1: The session made you question your behavior and how you might change

The first question asked students if the “session made [students] question [their] behavior and how [they] might change,” in relation to immigration, the great depression and World War I and II, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In relation to immigration, out of 25 responses, 20% of the students mentioned that this session did not question their behavior and how they can change; 32% responded they slightly questioned their behavior and how they might change. And only about 48% mentioned that the session on immigration made them question their behavior and how they might change with 32% responding somewhat, 4% mostly, and 12% definitely.

In relation to the Great Depression and World War I and II, out of 25 students 8% of students mentioned that this session did not make them question their behavior and how they might change; 20% mentioned that slightly. Most students (72%), mentioned that the session on the Great Depression and World War I and II made them question their behavior and how they might change with 52% responding somewhat, 12% mostly, and 8% definitely.

In relation to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, out of 26 students 15% of students mentioned that this session did not make them question their behavior and how they might change; 12% mentioned that slightly; 23% somewhat; 27% mostly; and 23% mentioned that this session definitely made them question their behavior and how they might change.

Question # 2: You felt that the presentations were interesting and kept your attention

Question number two asked students if “[they] felt that the presentations were interesting and kept [their] attention.” In response to the session on immigration, out of 26 students, 12% mentioned that they did not feel that the presentations were interesting and kept their attention and 19% responded slightly. About 69% of students responded that the presentations were interesting and kept their attention with 23% responded somewhat, 19% responded mostly, and 27% responded definitely.

In relation to the session on the Great Depression and World War I and II, out of 26 students 4 % responded that the presentations were not interesting and did not keep their attention; 15% responded slightly. About 81% responded that the presentation on the Great Depression and World War I and II was interesting and kept their attention, 27% responded somewhat, 19% responded mostly, and 35% responded definitely.

In response to the session on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, out of 26 students 4% did not mention that the presentation was interesting and kept their attention and 12% responded slightly. Most students (85%) responded that the presentation on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

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was interesting and kept their attention: 23% responded somewhat; 27% responded mostly; and 35% responded definitely.

Question # 3: You learned something new from the session

Question number 3 asked the students if they learnt something new from the session. In relation to the session on immigration, out of 25 students 4% mentioned that they slightly learnt something new from the session. About 96% of students mentioned that they learned something new from the session on immigration with 28% responding somewhat; 24% responding mostly; and 44% responding definitely.

In relation to the Great Depression and World War I and II, out of 26 students, 8% mentioned that they did not learn anything new from the session; 4% responded slightly. And about 88% responded that they learned something new from the session on the Great Depression and World War I and II with 19% responding somewhat; 19% responding mostly; and 50% responding definitely.

In response to the session on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, out of 26 students 4% responded that they did not learn anything new from the session on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. A large majority of students mentioned that they had learned something new with 8% responding somewhat; 19% responding mostly; and 69% responding that they had definitely learned something new.

Qualitative findings of students' responses

Students responded to two qualitative questions, namely:

- (1) question number four (4) on the students' questionnaire asked, "*What is one thing you will do in your life to promote harmony and peace around you?*"
- (2) students completed a letter-writing project related to their grandmothers. In their letters, students updated their grandparents on what was happening in present day society. The letters to grandma touched on the three main topics that guide this project, namely (1) immigration, (2) the great depression and the two world wars, and (3) on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. First, we present qualitative findings based on Question # 4.

Question # 4 of students' survey

In response to question number four (4) "What is one thing you will do in your life to promote harmony and peace around you?" students responses indicate that after taking part in the Ekota school project, they reflected on their own role in creating and promoting harmonious, peaceful, and just societies. Students reflected on how they might do this in the different areas of their lives; at home, school, and in their relationships with others in their communities.

Reflecting on relationships at home

When reflecting on how they will work on creating and promoting harmonious, peaceful, and just environments at home, students talked about their intention to be actively involved in household chores. Students mentioned, "*If clean the dishes all the time,*" "*To try and clean my room,*" "*I will pick up all of the garbage on the floor.*" These responses might signify that chores are an area of contention at

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home and students recognize their role in this conflict and have actively thought about ways and behaviors they might engage in to avoid these misunderstandings. Another student mentioned that they will help create harmony at home *“by sleeping,”* which indicates that another challenge at home was not going to sleep early, which brought disharmony at home. And another student mentioned that they would, *“go on a bike ride and not sit on my game all the time”* indicating that some of the challenges stemmed from their choice of entertainment and the length of time they spent playing video games.

The students also talked about peace and harmony in the context of their family relationships. One student commented on how their parents were splitting up. Even though the student was sad about their parents impending split-up, the student highlighted a positive impact stemming from the decision to separate. The student mentioned that their *“mom was happier and healthier,” “both parents were more stable,” “they would live in a bigger place,”* and, *“there was no more yelling between parents.”* The two negatives that were mentioned include, *“not having both parents at once,”* and that it was *“difficult to see dad especially in winter.”* However, they acknowledged the importance of this arrangement in maintaining peace and harmony at home. They mentioned that as a family, *“we wouldn’t have done anything differently. We did get more stable and made an agreement where me and my brother would stay and will be taken care of.”*

Another student talked about peace and harmony in the context of the availability of social safety nets that provide support during difficult times. The student mentioned that their family was experiencing financial challenges with the stepfather getting laid off, the biological father not paying child support, and the mom who was on a medical income. Even though this family was experiencing financial challenges, they had a social support system that consisted of friends and family. The family also utilized some resources that were available within their community, such as the food bank. Thus, the student mentioned, *“[they] used the food bank and asked for help from friends and family members, and we pay them back when we can.”* This discussion is significant on two main levels because it shows that peace and harmony can also be on a more mental, emotional, and economic level and that a strong social support system is important in supporting individuals and families going through life challenges.

Reflecting on relationships at school

Some of the students mentioned what they would do to build and maintain harmonious and peaceful environments in their school community. Students mentioned that they would work on building and maintaining positive relationships with other students by making others feel welcome. For example, they would introduce themselves to others and make sure to pass compliments. Students also mentioned that they would find *“Friendly ways to react when [they] don’t like something about another person, or you meet someone that is very different from you.”* In these instances, students will, *“ask [others] about their differences and explain [theirs]”*. This is a very important response as students recognize that everyone is different, that it is not about “othering” the other person by being Eurocentric for everyone is different. Students also mentioned that is important to find commonalities with other people because though it might seem like people are different, there are a lot of similarities between people.

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Some students also mentioned that they were going to build harmonious, peaceful, and just communities by helping other people. This help included being a voice for the voiceless by standing up against bullying and speaking up on behalf of people who are being bullied. Students also mentioned that they would become peacemakers by, *“trying to stop fights at school with the grade 6s.”* Students also mentioned they will be inclusive to everyone, which included treating everyone the same and including everyone when playing, *“so there be no fight and people sad.”* The students realised that conflict and disharmony create a lot of physical and mental stress as those that are being excluded and mistreated can become sad. Students also mentioned that it was important to speak out when they did not like something instead of keeping quiet. This is important because if people do not speak-up it builds resentment, which often leads to quarrels.

Reflecting on relationships with other people

When reflecting on how they might build and promote harmonious, peaceful, and just relationships with people that are different from them students mentioned two main ways they might do this. Students were going to, *“try to stop racism and discrimination to people with a different culture or skin colour.”* Some of the way’s students were going to try and stop racism include, being, *“nice and kind and include people of all different races and cultures,”* and *“I will be kind and include people of all different ages, sizes, and culture or religion.”* These responses indicate that the students were aware that there are different kinds of diversities, which include race, gender, age, religion, sexual identity etc. This is very significant because in most cases people think of diversities in terms of race; students are then able to be inclusive to everyone based on these different kinds of diversities.

Students also mentioned that they would ensure that they are respectful to people of cultures different from their own and they would do this by applying the golden rule, *“treat people the way you want to be treated.”* This response evidences that students know that maintaining peace and harmony is a reciprocal, two-way process; that if you mistreat or treat others with respect people are likely to respond in similar ways. Students also mentioned standing up against people that do not want to maintain peace and harmony, one mentioned, *“If someone is being racist to another person, I will stand up against them”* and another, *“I’ll be kind to all the people around.”*

Students also mentioned non-confrontational means of avoiding conflict to create harmonious and peaceful communities. Some students mentioned that they will, *“try not to start anything,”* another, *“not be mean to anyone,”* and yet another *“If there is a fight, I am just going to walk away to keep peace and harmony around me.”* Students need to understand that sometimes non-confrontational ways of do not always maintain peace in the long-term for the conflict might be ignored and swept under the carpet. Students also planned to accommodate other people by being *“flexible.”* This is an important response in trying to find a middle ground and maintain peace and harmony. However, the question is, *“to what extent should one accommodate others without compromising own values and beliefs.”*

Reflecting on freedom to practice own religion

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Some students also reflected on the fact that people in present day society now had freedom to practice their own religion. One student commented,

Yes, life would be different if we were not allowed to practice our own religion, because everyone would be forced to believe the same thing, which most people do not.

Students also reflected on the fact that even though people now had freedom of religion, this right was not always honored, *“for many people still get discriminated against for what they believe.”*

Letters to Grandma

Immigration

In relation to immigration, students wrote in their letters to grandmothers that the world had changed in that there was increased immigration between countries. Canadians were also immigrating to other countries; it was not just people from other countries coming and settling in Canada. Increased immigration was facilitated by laws that had been enacted that streamlined and reduced barriers to immigration and encouraged the free movement of people between nations. Increased immigration also spoke to the fact that people/countries were getting along and could work out their differences. Even though there was increased cooperation between and within countries, there was still discrimination based on differences in race, culture, and religion. There was need to change this mindset in order to increase and encourage peace and harmony. A student mentioned, *“I want to change people’s bad thoughts on other racism and culture religion.”*

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Closely linked to immigration was the issue of rights and freedoms. Students mentioned in their letters to grandmothers that people from other cultures (immigrants to Canada) enjoyed the same freedoms as those of Canadian citizens. For example, laws were enacted that looked at religious freedoms which allowed different ways of worship. However, even though there was a strong acceptance of people from “other” cultures, with people from different cultural and religious backgrounds living and working together in the same communities, immigrants were still experiencing discrimination based on these differences. Students mentioned to their grandmothers that people were working on stopping discrimination and racism because it was not right to treat others unfairly based on religious and cultural differences. A student mentioned,

one thing we should change is just letting people be who they are and not trying to change that because they are a different culture doesn’t mean you have to change them.

Some students also mentioned that in Canada, there were now laws that allowed the Aboriginal Peoples’ of Canada to learn and speak their own languages, addressing discrimination against the Aboriginal Peoples.

Students also talked a lot on rights and freedoms based on gender. In their letters to Grandmothers most of the students talked about women’s right to vote. Students mentioned the right to vote as a great

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milestone as women had the power to make political decisions, *“today we have more rights for women like we vote for prime minister.”* Another right that women had was access to the same employment opportunities to those of men. Students mentioned that even though women had access to the same employment opportunities, women were still getting less pay than men even when performing the same job. People were working on making women’s pay equal to that of men. Some students also mentioned challenges related to work-family balance for both men and women in terms of long working hours. This was mostly challenging for women because in most family’s women/mothers were still responsible for unpaid household tasks. A student mentioned,

life here... daddy is working longer hours. And mom is ever overwhelmed with work, dinner, and a lot more. Sometimes I think I should learn to cook early so I can help more and sometimes I do more chores than I should.

Students also spoke about how they were doing in school in relation to their academic and social lives. Some students mentioned that they were getting good grades in school and had made a lot of good friends. However, sometimes students experienced challenges in school due to bullying as some students were mean to each other. Some students stated that they wished this could change and that laws against bullying should be implemented. One student mentioned, *“I wish they could change something... that nobody has the right to bully someone because of their culture and religion.”*

The students also mentioned changing societal norms and values regarding the raising of children. They mentioned that in modern day society children had rights and needed to be protected from abuse. One mentioned, *“Right now it is better because we don’t have to go through ... all the stuff like when little kids got whipped for being who they are.”* Laws had been enacted to protect children against abuse.

The two World Wars and the Great Depression

Some students mentioned in their letters to grandmothers that Canada was not at war with any country in present day society. And other students mentioned that even though Canada was a peaceful place, other countries were experiencing wars, *“things are good here and bad in other places.”* Students also mentioned that the great depression was over.

4.2 Parents evaluations

As a result of your home conversation, you (or your family) questioned your behavior and how you might change?	1 Not at all	2 Slightly	3 Somewhat	4 Mostly	5 Definitely	Total n=6
Session 1-Immigration	1 16.7%	1 16.7%	3 50.0%	1 16.7%	0 0%	n=6 100.0%
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II	1 16.7%	2 33.3%	0 0%	2 33.3%	1 16.7%	n=6 100.0%
Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms	1 16.7%	1 16.7%	1 16.7%	2 33.3%	1 16.7%	n=6 100.0%

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You felt that the discussion questions were interesting and promoted engaging conversations with your family.						
Session 1-Immigration	0 0%	1 16.7%	2 33.3%	1 16.7%	2 33.3%	n=6 100.0%
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II	0 0%	2 33.3%	0 0%	3 50.0%	1 16.7%	n=6 100.0%
Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 66.7%	2 33.3%	n=6 100.0%
You learned something new from the session because your child shared some of the content with you:						
Session 1-Immigration	0 0%	2 33.3%	2 33.3%	4 66.7%	0 0%	n=6 100.0%
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II	0 0%	1 16.7%	2 33.3%	3 50.0%	0 0%	n=6 100.0%
Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms	0 0%	2 33.3%	1 16.7%	3 50.0%	0 0%	n=6 100.0%

Most parents did not respond to the parents' survey, only six parents responded. Using a 5. Likert scale with 1 as not at all and 5 as definitely, parents responded to three questions related to the three main topic areas that guide this project, which are related to the grade five (5) curriculum, namely (1) Immigration, (2) the Great Depression and World War I and II, and (3) the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Question # 1: As a result of your home conversation, you (or your family) questioned your behavior and how you might change?

The first question read, "*As a result of your home conversation, you (or your family) questioned your behavior and how you might change?*" Quantitative findings to this question indicate that in relation to immigration, out of the six (6) participants that responded, 16.7% (1) responded not at all, 16.7% (1) slightly, 50% (3) somewhat, and 16.7% (1) mostly. In relation to the Great Depression and World War I and II, out of the six (6) participants that responded, 16.7% (1) responded not at all, 33.3% (2) responded slightly, 33.3% (2) mostly, and 16.7% (1) definitely. In relation to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, out of the six (6) participants that responded, 16.7% (1) responded not at all, 16.7% (1) responded slightly, 16.7% (1) somewhat, 33.3% (2) responded mostly, and 16.7% (1) responded definitely. The responses to the first question indicate that these families had mostly questioned their behaviors and how they might change on two main topic areas, namely the topics on *Immigration* and on the *Canadian Rights and Freedoms*. This might indicate that responses were influenced by everyday experience as these topics were of common discussion today compared to the topic on the Great Depression and World War I and II.

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Question # 2: You felt that the discussion questions were interesting and promoted engaging conversations with your family.

The second question in the parent survey read, “*You felt that the discussion questions were interesting and promoted engaging conversations with your family.*” Quantitative findings to this question indicate that in relation to immigration, out of the six (6) participants that responded, 16.7% (1) responded slightly, 33.3% (2) responded somewhat, 16.7% (1) responded mostly, and 33.3% (2) responded definitely. Quantitative findings to this question indicate that most respondents (83.3%) felt that the discussion questions were interesting and promoted engaging conversations with their family. In their qualitative response one (1) parent mentioned that they had very interesting conversations with their children and even their youngest child joined in the conversations regarding immigration and the topics related to this project. This parent also mentioned that they saved the questions so that they can discuss them again. In relation to the section on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms a 100% of respondents mentioned that the discussion questions were interesting and promoted engaging conversations with their families with 66.7% (4) responding mostly and 33.3% (2) responding definitely.

Question # 3: You learned something new from the session because your child shared some of the content with you.

The third question asked parents if they had learned something new from the session because their children had shared some of the content with them. In relation to the section on immigration, out of the 6 respondents, quantitative findings show that 33.3% (2) slightly learned something new because their children had shared some content with them, 16.7% (1) responded somewhat, and 66.7% responded mostly. In relation to the section on the Great Depression and the World Wars (I & II), out of the six (6) respondents, 16.7% (1) responded slightly, 33.3% (2) responded somewhat, and 50% (3) responded mostly. And in relation to the section on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, out of the 6 respondents, 33.3% (2) responded slightly, 16.1% (1) responded somewhat, and 50% (3) responded mostly. Qualitative findings indicate that parents learned something new about the session on immigration because their child shared some of the content with them. One parent mentioned that their family had discussed a lot of stories on immigration because their son had shared these stories with them. Their family enjoyed these stories and these discussions had generated a lot of questions, which they will discuss in the future. This parent also learnt something new about their child, that their child was passionate regarding immigration issues.

4.3 Teacher evaluations

Teacher Survey

As a result of my observations, I believe my students questioned their behavior and how they might change:	1 Not at all	2 Slightly	3 Somewhat	4 Mostly	5 Definitely	Total n=5
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Session 1-Immigration						
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II						
Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms						
I felt that the presentations were interesting and kept the attention of my students:						
Session 1-Immigration						
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II						
Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms						
I believe my students learnt something new from the session:						
Session 1-Immigration						
Session 2-Great Depression & World War 1 & II						
Session 3- Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms						

The teacher evaluation form asked questions regarding the outcomes of the Ekota school project in relation to students learning and delivery of the project. All three teachers that responded to the quantitative questionnaire provided only qualitative responses. This feedback mostly looked at the processes that were engaged in, in delivering the project and the overall delivery of the workshops. These responses cited what worked well and areas that require improvement in terms of the three questions asked in the survey. The teachers also provided feedback as the program was being implemented and this feedback was incorporated to improve the next sessions. After each session, the presenters and attending teachers discussed student's engagement; the effectiveness of the presentations, the impact on participants and identification of areas to improve. Strategies were identified and implemented in the next session.

Question # 1: As a result of my observations, I believe my students questioned their behavior and how they might change:

The teachers' feedback did not highlight responses to this question.

Question #2: I felt that the presentations were interesting and kept the attention of my students:

What worked well:

All three teachers commented that the presentations were interesting and kept the attention of the students in several ways.

Learning Aids:

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All teachers commented that the use of learning aids kept the attention of the students and accommodated the learning needs of different types of learners. The facilitators used different types of visual aids, which include power-point presentations, camera, videos, posters. Another teacher commented that the use of posters showed the purpose and connection of presentation. The videos were said to be child appropriate, for example they had different colors and could be magnified to help the students see. Some of the learning aids were used in combination which enhanced learning experience, a teacher mentioned, *“using a chart to go with the video was effective to reinforce idea.”* These learning aids kept the presentations interesting and kept the attention of the students.

Presentation Style:

The teachers also commented that the presentation styles used by the facilitators kept the attention of the students. First, the facilitators encouraged, “a lot of group discussions to start off the class in order to focus student answers during the discussion.” Guiding questions were used to facilitate discussions, which reinforced students learning. Facilitators also kept the attention of students by presenting different perspectives to the discussion points, providing a holistic and comprehensive understanding to the topics. One teacher commented, “I liked the facilitators comments about what the opposite would look like also, so we don’t practice it,” this was a discussion of possible positives versus negatives of war. The facilitators also kept the attention of students and reinforced learning by summarizing and rephrasing discussion points to help focus student answers during the discussion.

Students participation:

The presentations also kept the attention of students by engaging and involving students in the sessions. Students were involved in presenting some of the material for example, “students took part in the reading of letters to grandmothers,” and the students enjoyed reading and participating in these presentations. Students were also encouraged to do individual work to reinforce learning; as well the students took part in small group work to allow for knowledge sharing and transfer. Through group work students learnt how to work together and collaborate on completing tasks.

Students were also actively engaged in discussions during the sessions and this enriched the sessions because students shared personal experiences. One teacher mentioned that the students enjoyed talking about their heritage after a workshop about individual immigrants. All students were encouraged to participate by taking turns to participate in the discussion. One teacher mentioned,

Using popsicle sticks keeps them all accountable to be thinking. This prevents the same kids from always answering and others think they can turn their brains off.

Question # 3: I believe my students learnt something new from the session:

Content:

The teachers commented that the facilitators presented a lot of good material in the workshops related to the three topics that guide this project, which are part of the grade 5 curriculum. The content of the

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videos was also said to be very impactful because the videos relayed the point across, for example the video on unequal pay.

Some teachers mentioned that facilitators had probing guiding questions, which allowed students to connect major historical events to modern society. For example, a teacher mentioned, “I liked the question where the famous five work would fit in. I think more questions like this would make them apply the charter and interact with it.” Teachers also mentioned that they believe their students learnt something new from the workshops because of the type and quality of students’ responses. There was also evidence that students learnt a lot from the workshop because students were applying what they had learnt into practice, “its neat to see them apply the charter to their world.”

Areas that require improvement

In their feedback, teachers also commented on areas that require improvement. This section presents the feedback that was received regarding the different areas that require improvement for the benefit of future programming and program improvement. These comments will be provided based on the three questions that were on the teacher evaluation form.

Question # 1: As a result of my observations, I believe my students questioned their behavior and how they might change:

The teachers’ feedback did not highlight responses to this question.

Question # 2: I felt that the presentations were interesting and kept the attention of my students:

Teachers mentioned that sometimes the presentations did not keep the attention of students. This was due to several factors mentioned below.

Presentation Style:

Teachers commented that in some cases there was a lot of lecture-type teaching, which made it easy for students to lose attention. To capture student’s attention, there was need to use a combination of teaching styles. Inserting pictures on the slides would have helped with comprehension. A teacher mentioned that facilitators use of scenarios was useful in one instance and the use of more scenarios could have aided the understanding of material.

Students Participation:

Teachers provided feedback to enhance student’s participation and to increase learning during participation activities. In relation to the presentation of letters to grandmothers, the teachers suggested that this activity could have been made more interactive, “by maybe having the students read different letters in different groups and then sharing a few key points with the class could help.” As well, teachers suggested that, “stopping after each letter would have helped students to stay focussed and understand the content better.”

The teachers also mentioned that although it was good that facilitators summarized and rephrased questions to help focus student answers during the discussion, some of the questions asked were too

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broad; more focused questions would get the responses from students. It was important to keep reminding students of the focus of the lessons to keep their attention.

Student Engagement:

Teachers mentioned that it would have been helpful for each student to have a question sheet to help them to stay organized and focused. Teachers also suggested to “break kids into small groups and assign them one item to do a mini skit (very quick).” This would help with keeping students’ attention and help with movement as the students would have sat for a for a long-time. Images on the booklet would help students to be more engaged; visuals to go with the letters would help the student’s comprehension; a video could also help to grab the student’s attention. Teachers also mentioned that it would have been good to encourage student’s participation by providing a sentence structure and encouraging short discussions with their neighbors. It would also be helpful to write focus points on the board for students’ reference.

Time Management:

All three teachers that provided feedback mentioned that keeping time was a challenge for the facilitators as the conversations or workshops went longer than anticipated. For example, in one of the workshops the review discussion was 25 minutes instead of 5 minutes. A consequence of this is to lose students attention with a lot of talking at the beginning as students were starting to lose interest. It is important to improvise to reroute the direction of your lessons when it is running longer and cut points.

Question # 3: I believe my students learnt something new from the session:

Content

Some of the comments received concerned the lack of depth of some of the topics. For example, one of the teachers commented that the topic on immigration “didn’t go very deep... skipped over some stressors that may have faced some of our students’ families.” This teacher suggested that it would have been helpful to add another slide of the common stressors that immigrants may encounter and turn these into a scenario conversation (hurtful demo versus non-hurtful demo). The teachers also commented that in some cases, there was more content than needed, “less content would make more active learning possible.” The quality and depth of discussion questions was not consistent across the topics as some of the sessions had much depth and others did not.

Language

The teachers also commented on the language used. They mentioned that the language could have been changed into that understood by students. For example, “The beginning slides for charter of rights and freedoms need to be put into a language that they will understand.” It will also be important to simplify questions and provide, “a sample answer to help the students to think about the question.” Teachers also talked about the need to use politically correct language, for example from Indian to Indigenous peoples. Use of the word “aboriginal” should be “First Nations.”

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4.4 Feedback from facilitators

Facilitators mentioned that the “Stressors Through Canadian History: Working Towards a Culture of Peace and Harmony” workshops were very beneficial to students, teachers, and the facilitators. One of the great benefits of this project was to open dialogue with students to discuss issues related to diversity and inclusion, which encouraged students think about their identity and some students did not know their nationality. Students also learnt about how to work together to achieve peace and harmony despite the differences. Students learnt to appreciate and value diversity and to know that differences are good as everyone can use their different strengths to build a strong society. As students learnt about appreciating difference, this would help curb on bullying in schools because the students would appreciate each other. Facilitators also mentioned that it was beneficial that the students took their learnings home and begun a dialogue with their families and communities.

One facilitator commented that she had learnt a lot from this project on a more personal level, things she wished she had learnt a long-time ago. She stated, *“I have become a better person, to be able to stand up to bullies.”* These learnings would have helped her build on her confidence as a new immigrant and helped her in different areas of her life, especially in her workplace. The facilitator mentioned that it was important to also deliver to integrate into their new homeland.

Facilitators mentioned that they had one big challenge that they had more material than the time and did not know how much to bring. This affected the delivery of the workshops and their time-management skills. The facilitators also devised ways to deal with this challenge in the future and mentioned that, *“curriculum topics to be covered should be kept specific and narrow so that there is adequate time to provide the intended experience.”* More time was also needed in order to allow students to share personal and family experiences related to the topics under discussion and to allow students to learn from each other.

In terms of the delivery of the workshop’s facilitators noted that children respond very well to youth (young adults). In future programs, engaging young adults in the delivery will be beneficial. Despite the fact young adults were not as involved in this project, students appeared to be very engaged in the workshops. A facilitator mentioned that,

by the last session the students were clearly discussing the concepts and identifying their role and actions that can support building a more peaceful and harmonious society.

Overall, facilitators mentioned that they appreciated their partnership with Ekota school as everyone worked together to achieve the goals and objectives of the project.

4.5 Conclusion and recommendations

Findings from the Ekota School Project indicate that this project achieved its goals and objectives in terms of expanding (grade 5) students’ knowledge and understanding of Canadian History in three topic areas related to the grade five (5) curriculum, namely:

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- (i) Canada's historical immigrant experiences, looking at the trajectory of immigration to Canada and the reasons for immigration since the 1500s to present;
- (ii) World-wars, the depression, and the famous five, and;
- (iii) The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Students also gained practical learnings in relation to building peace and harmony as indicated by students, parents, and teachers' responses to the evaluation questions. Students mentioned various ways by which they would build peace and harmony in their homes, school, and their community. Findings also indicated that the "*Stressors Through Canadian History: Working Towards a Culture of Harmony and Peace*" workshops would also be beneficial to adults.

The recommendations from this project are in two parts, focusing on the evaluation of process and outcomes. With regard process, it is important to consider the recommendations provided by the teachers in terms of program design and implementation for program improvement. The outcomes from this project points to the fact that there is need for such a program in schools. It is important to partner with other schools and implement this program on a larger scale for it has great educational and social benefit at the individual, family, and community levels. Similar programs targeting the adult population can be developed and implemented to help facilitate the integration of newcomer communities into the Canadian society.