

### **3. CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING**

Ranya Khan: It takes time for newcomers to Canada to fully adapt and acculturate to their new home. The feelings of excitement and anticipation for what lies ahead for new immigrant families is sometimes overshadowed by feelings of loss and confusion and experiences of discrimination. Although not all families have the same experiences and same feelings, each person must adjust to this new culture. The immigrant families experiences and process of adjustment are often aided if the individuals they encounter show cultural sensitivity and awareness.

Urdu Speaking Parent: Nothing makes sense! At that time, when we first arrived because there is such a difference with our religion, and where we're from, between Pakistan and Canada the way of life and culture, there is a big difference and this makes it difficult. One can't understand anything! We're thinking, where have we arrived?

Ranya Khan: Another Somali parent views knowledge of language as key to a parents acceptance by the school.

Somali Speaking Parent: If the person speaks the language and has knowledge, then that person is respected because they know the rules, the culture and the habits, they have more resources, their level of education and that of the teachers' is the same and they can communicate with the teacher easier. But if the person does not speak the language or does not understand the system and is black the children and parents will not be accepted in the schools. Because I went many times to the schools to helping other parents, even when I am standing there and talking to them if the teacher sees that you are knowledgeable he will respect you, but if he sees that you are not knowledgeable then he will show superiority. I believe that whether you are black or white, none of us were born to become gang members. Everybody has equal rights; this is a country of opportunity. But your colour, the language you speak, and the way you dress can negatively impact your life. The lives of many black people who came to this country before us and who are still here have been destroyed. Although there were black people before us, when you go to schools you will see that all the school staff are white, you will not see one black person. So what happened to them? They did not come to Canada as refugees, they came here as slaves but we Somalis face the same problems that were faced by them.

Ranya Khan: A cultural divide between children and parents may result in children feeling ashamed of their home culture and parents feeling concerned with how they can incorporate the school's culture without abandoning their home culture.

Educator: They're leaving their home, so that's the first loss to them and they're coming to another place and that's a new discovery for them. As we mentioned before, all the sacrifices are done, they need to pay off, they need to see the light at the end of the tunnel to make the journey

worthwhile. So they live in constant fear: will I be able to make it? Will I live for something or for nothing? And this really plays a huge role on their psychological health, really, throughout the years.