

# MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE



## **Introduction**

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres is committed to ensuring that the service provided to our clients is culturally respectful and whenever possible, in the language with which the client feels most comfortable.

“We treat individuals with respect for their dignity and recognize that everyone is unique... and act in a manner which respects and promotes an understanding of differences and work towards the elimination of prejudice, discrimination and racism...”<sup>1</sup>

The impetus for this undertaking comes from the recognition that language, culture and race have a significant impact on our service delivery and how that intervention is experienced by our clients.

As a youth center, we work with clients of various cultures whose mother tongue is neither English nor French. In order to serve our clients with the utmost respect and sensitivity, the agency assures that the clients and interveners have access to resources that assist the intervener to ensure that all aspects of the clients' culture/race is respected and understood by all who are involved. It is imperative that you take into account all aspects of a client's culture and race including and not withstanding an understanding of their experiences in their native country, their migration to Canada, their experiences while in Canada and most importantly with whom they identify. One can not assume from a first meeting or from written material how a client defines himself; this aspect must always be discussed with your client.

A list of the various communities in Montreal who represent our clients has been compiled so that we can, as much as possible; meet our clients' basic cultural, racial and linguistic needs. The Black and Jewish communities publish their own resource guides annually. These can be found online at the websites listed within their sections or a hard copy requested of the specific agency.

This guide is not exhaustive and will be continually updated as more or different resources become available. The guide provides generalizations of communities which do not presume to define each client. The generalizations that follow are, just that, generalizations and should not be applied as if they were hard and fast rules but rather as general guidelines to working with a client from a certain culture, community, country or race. This information should be used only as a starting point to one's learning about a client and their culture and should not be used in place of further exploration. Attempts are made at all levels to connect our staff with the appropriate resources to meet our clients' needs however given the complexities of our work, time frames and the number of differing cultures with which we work, it is not always possible.

If there are communities which are not included in this guide for whom you need or have information, please do not hesitate to contact the Liaison - Cultural Consulting and Language Interpreting Service (CCLIS), Clinical Support Services, Department of Professional Services.

MR/MC Sub-Committee:  
Susan Pinsky, Dorothy Williams, Nora Hanna

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<sup>1</sup> BYFC Code of Ethics June 2008 pgs. 6-7

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## **AFRO-CANADIAN COMMUNITY:**

Very little has been found on this topic however the traditions and socializations are relevant nonetheless.

- ‘village raises a child’
- women are often the heads of the families
- respect to elders is expected– children will be reprimanded for either through ‘cutting eyes’ or ‘stripsing’
- ‘children should be seen and not heard’ Girls are raised to be caretakers and mothers
- child rearing is deferred to women
- men may be called upon for discipline
- religion not overtly followed but culture is traditional and spiritual
- children and grandchildren are embraced and cherished outside of traditional marriage or in homes of a single parent
- emphasis is placed on supporting the growth of the family and not on relationships between men/women. Men are often on the periphery of families
- education strongly valued in community
- Canadian born young struggle with identity – defining who they are and where they belong
- ‘family’ extends beyond the nuclear definition and may include close friends of parents.

## **ASIAN COMMUNITY**

### **Chinese Family Services of Greater Montréal**

987 Coté St.  
4<sup>th</sup> floor  
Montréal  
H2Z 1L1  
514-861-5244 # 223

Interpretation and translation, social support services, educational and recreational services, information and referrals

### **Montréal Chinese Community Centre**

211 de la Gauchetière O  
Montréal  
H2Z 1C5  
514-861-4541

### **Vietnamese Christian Gospel**

3564 rue Aylmer  
Montréal  
H2X 2B8  
514-843-7952

### **Cantonese Basics**

Hello, how are you?: nehih ho ma?  
Fine: geih ho  
Goodbye: baahih baahih/joih gin  
Thanks: M goih  
Excuse me: M goih  
Do you speak English?: Nehih sik m sik gong ying man a?  
I don't understand: Ngoh m mihng

### **Mandarin Basics**

Hello: Ni hao  
Good bye: zaijian  
Thank you: Xiexie  
You're welcome: Bukeqi  
I'm sorry: Duibuqi  
What's your name?: Nin guixing?  
Where are you from? Ni shi cong nar laide?  
No (don't have): Mei you  
No (not so): Bushi  
I don't understand: Wo fingshudong  
Do you understand?: Dong ma?

### **Montréal Chinese Cultural and Community Centre**

1088 Clark  
Montréal  
H2Z 1K2  
514-788-8986

### **SIARI (Support, advocacy, Interpretation, Translation Cantonese & Vietnamese)**

6767 Cote des Neiges #499  
Montréal  
H3S 2T6  
514-738-4763

### **Chinese Catholic Community**

979 Coté St.  
Montréal  
H2Z 1L1  
514-843-3339  
Support to the Chinese community

## **Chinese Culture**

### **The Importance of "Face"**

- The concept of 'face' roughly translates as 'honour', 'good reputation' or 'respect'.

### **Collectivism vs. Individualism**

- In general, the Chinese are a collective society with a need for group affiliation, whether to their family, school, work group, or country.
- In order to maintain a sense of harmony, they will act with decorum at all times and will not do anything to cause someone else public embarrassment.
- They are willing to subjugate their own feelings for the good of the group.
- This is often observed by the use of silence in very structured meetings. If someone disagrees with what another person says, rather than disagree publicly, the person will remain quiet. This gives face to the other person, while speaking up would make both parties lose face.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

- To the Chinese non-verbal communication speaks volumes.
- Since the Chinese strive for harmony and are group dependent, they rely on facial expression, tone of voice and posture to tell them what someone feels.
- Frowning while someone is speaking is interpreted as a sign of disagreement. Therefore, most Chinese maintain an impassive expression when speaking.
- It is considered disrespectful to stare into another person's eyes. In crowded situations the Chinese avoid eye contact to give themselves privacy.

### **Meeting Etiquette**

- Greetings are formal and the oldest person is always greeted first.
- Handshakes are the most common form of greeting.
- Many Chinese will look towards the ground when greeting someone.
- Address the person by an honorific title and their surname. If they want to move to a first-name basis, they will advise you which name to use.
- You should arrive at meetings on time or slightly early. The Chinese view punctuality as a virtue. Arriving late is an insult and could negatively affect your relationship
- One on one meeting requires patience. Never ask the Chinese to turn off their mobile phones as this causes you both to lose face.

### **Negotiation**

- Business negotiations occur at a slow pace.
- Decisions may take a long time, as they require careful review and consideration.
- Do not use high-pressure tactics.

## **Hong Kong Culture**

### **The Concept of Face**

- Face is an intangible quality that reflects a person's reputation, dignity, and prestige.
- You may lose face, save face, or give face to another person.
- You give someone face by complimenting them, showing them respect, or doing anything that increases their self-esteem.
- Such actions must be done with the utmost sincerity. Humiliating them, insulting them publicly, or contradicting them in front of someone else causes them to lose face.

### **Confucianism / Hierarchy / Family Values**

- The teachings of Confucius describe the position of the individual in Hong Kong Chinese society.
- Confucianism is a system of behaviours and ethics that stress the obligations of people towards one another based upon their relationship. Confucianism stresses duty, loyalty, honour, filial piety, respect for age and seniority, and sincerity.
- Although not readily apparent to the casual observer, there are strict rules about appropriate behaviour and the manner in which people must act in order to respect the hierarchy.

### **Meeting and Greeting**

- The handshake is commonly used when greeting westerners.
- During the greeting, many Hong Kong Chinese lower their eyes as a sign of respect.
- There is no need for you to emulate this gesture, although prolonged eye contact should be avoided during the greeting.
- The Chinese traditionally have 3 names: The surname is first and is followed by two personal names. The first personal name is their father's name and the second personal name is their own name.
- If they want to move to a first name basis, they will advise you which name to use.
- Some Chinese adopt more western names and may ask you to call them by that name.

### **Building Relationships & Communication**

- When you first meet, expect a fair amount of small talk. Do not be surprised if you are asked questions that might be considered extremely personal.
- Hong Kong Chinese are direct communicators, although they also make use of non-verbal communication.
- In general, people are non-confrontational and will never overtly say no, so that they do not embarrass the other person.
- If someone sucks air through his/her teeth while you are speaking, it means that they are unhappy with what you have just said. If at all possible, try to re-state your position or modify your request, since you have made the other person extremely unhappy.
- As in many Asian cultures, silence is a form of communication. Resist the urge to jump into the conversation if there is silence for a minute.

## **Singapore Culture**

### **The Family**

- The concepts of group, harmony, and mutual security are more important than that of the individual.
- The family is the centre of the social structure and emphasizes unity, loyalty and respect for the elderly.
- The term, 'family' generally includes extended family and close friends who are treated as family members.
- Respect for the elderly and seeing the family as the place one goes to for support, both help to retain core values.

### **Face & Respect**

- Having face indicates personal dignity.
- Singaporeans are very sensitive to retaining face in all aspects of their lives.
- Face is a prized commodity that can be given, lost, taken away or earned.
- It can also be greater than the person and extend to family, school, company, and even the nation itself.
- Face is what makes Singaporeans strive for harmonious relationships.

### **Hierarchy**

- Singaporeans claim they are an egalitarian society, yet they retain strong hierarchical relationships that can be observed in the relationship between parents and children, teachers and students, and employers and employees.
- The elderly are always treated with the utmost respect and courtesy.
- There was a law passed in 1996 that mandated that children must assume financial responsibility for their elderly parents should the need arise.

### **Ethnic Diversity**

- Singapore is a multi-ethnic society where Chinese, Malay and Indian traditions co-exist beneath the veneer of a western cosmopolitan metropolis.
- The three main ethnic groups are religiously and culturally diverse.

### **The Language**

Singapore has attempted to promote a national identity in its land of immigrants since its independence in 1965. As part of this effort, Singapore has four national languages: Mandarin, Malay, Tamil and English. For business and politics, English is the language of choice.

## **Non-Verbal Communication**

- Singaporeans are group dependent on facial expression, tone of voice and posture to tell them what someone feels.
- They often trust non-verbal messages more than the spoken word.
- They tend to be subtle, indirect and implicit in their communications.
- They hint at a point rather than making a direct statement, since that might cause the other person to lose face.
- Rather than say 'no', they might say, 'I will try', or 'I'll see what I can do'. These allow the person making the request and the person turning it down to save face and maintain harmony in their relationship.
- Silence is an important element of Singaporean communication.
- Pausing before responding to a question indicates that they have given the question appropriate thought and considered their response carefully.
- They do not understand the western culture's propensity to respond to a question hastily and as this indicates thoughtlessness and rude behaviour.

## **Meeting and Greeting**

- Greetings will follow a strict protocol often based on both the ethnic origin and age of the person.
- Men and women may shake hands, although the woman must extend her hand first. Introductions are always done in order of age or status.
- Malay men and women do not traditionally shake hands, since Muslim men do not touch women in public.
- Younger Malays may shake hands with foreign women, but it is more appropriate to use the 'salaam' (bowing the head) greeting.
- This is also the greeting to be used when two women meet.
- When being introduced to someone of the opposite sex, nodding the head and smiling is usually sufficient.
- In order to keep others from losing face, much communication will be non-verbal and you must closely watch the facial expressions and body language of people you work with.

## **Building Relationships & Communication**

- Personal relationships are the cornerstone of all business relationships.
- Rank is always respected. The eldest person in the group is revered.
- Most Singaporeans are soft-spoken and believe a calm demeanour is superior to a more aggressive style.
- Watch your body language and facial expressions.

## **Meeting Etiquette**

- Appointments are necessary.
- You should arrive at meetings on time. Punctuality is a virtue.
- There will be period of small talk before getting down to business discussions.
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication.
- Always wait to be told where to sit. There is a strict hierarchy that must be followed.

- Singaporeans are non-confrontational. They will not overtly say 'no'; likewise, their 'yes' does not always signify agreement.
- Singaporeans give a respectful pause of up to 15 seconds before answering a question. Do not speak too quickly or you will miss the answer.

## **Vietnamese Culture**

### **The Family**

- Vietnamese life revolves around the family.
- The Vietnamese family consists of the nuclear as well as the extended family.
- It is not uncommon for three generations to be living together under one roof.
- The father is the head of the family and it is his responsibility to provide food, clothing and shelter and make important decisions.

### **Face**

- As with many other Asian nations, the concept of face is extremely important to the Vietnamese.
- Face is a tricky concept to explain but can be roughly described a quality that reflects a person's reputation, dignity, and prestige.
- It is possible to lose face, save face or give face to another person.
- For foreigners it is important to be aware that you may unintentionally cause a loss of face so it is important to be aware of your words and actions.
- Someone can be given face by complimenting them for their hospitality. Accusing someone of poor performance or reprimanding them publicly will lead to a loss of face.
- Vietnamese society has a fair amount of public etiquette. The following are some of the more common points:
  - Do not touch someone's head.
  - Pass items with both hands.
  - Do not point with your finger - use your hand.
  - Do not stand with your hands on your hips.
  - Do not cross your arms on your chest.
  - Do not pass anything over someone's head.
  - Do not touch anyone on the shoulder.
  - Do not touch a member of the opposite sex.

### **Business Etiquette**

- The Vietnamese are punctual and expect others to also be on time.
- Handshakes are used upon meeting and departing. Handshakes only usually take place between members of the same sex.
- Some Vietnamese use a two-handed shake, with the left hand on top of the right wrist.
- Always wait for a woman to extend her hand. If she does not, bow your head slightly.
- Silence is also common in meetings where someone disagrees with another but remains quiet so as to not lose face.
- The spoken word is very important. Never make promises that you can not keep to as this will lead to a loss of face.

## **ITALIAN COMMUNITY**

### **Leonardo Davinci Centre**

8350-8370 boul Lacordaire  
St. Leonard  
H1R 3Y6  
514-955-8370  
[information@centreleonardodavinci.com](mailto:information@centreleonardodavinci.com)

### **Italian Woman's Shelter of Montréal**

514-388-0980

### **Italian Canadian Employers for Assistance to Immigrants (PICAI)**

6865 Christophe-Colomb  
Montréal  
H2S 2H3  
514-271-5590

### **National Congress of Italian Canadians (Quebec Region)**

8370 boul Lacordaire  
Montréal  
H1R 3Y6  
514-279-6357

Cultural activities, interpretation and translation.

Language courses, parenting courses, health related information and services, free legal consultation, translation and interpretation, assistance in filling out forms, applications, orientation and referrals for mental health, family, violence, drug alcohol issues.

### **Greetings**

Hello: Buongiorno

Goodbye: Arrivederci. Ciao. (inf)

Yes: Si

No: No

Please: Per favour

Thank you: Grazie

You're welcome: Prego

Excuse me: Mi scusi

Sorry (forgive me): Mi perdoni

## **Italian Culture**

### **Italian Family Values**

- The family is the centre of the social structure and provides a stabilizing influence for its members.
- In the north, generally only the nuclear family lives together; while in the south, the extended family often resides together in one house.
- The family provides both emotional and financial support to its members.

## **Italian Style**

- Appearances matter in Italy.
- The way you dress can indicate your social status, your family's background, and your education level.
- First impressions are lasting impressions in Italy.
- They unconsciously assess another person's age and social standing in the first few seconds of meeting them, often before any words are exchanged.
- You will be judged on your appearance.

## **Meeting Etiquette**

- Greetings are enthusiastic yet rather formal.
- The usual handshake with direct eye contact and a smile suffices between strangers.
- Wait until invited to move to a first name basis.
- Italians are guided by first impressions, so it is important that you demonstrate propriety and respect when greeting people, especially when meeting them for the first time.
- The goal of the initial meeting is to develop a sense of respect and trust with your Italian business colleagues.
- It is common to be interrupted while speaking or for several people to speak at once.
- People often raise their voice to be heard over other speakers, not because they are angry.
- Decisions are not reached in meetings. Meetings are meant for a free flow of ideas and to let everyone have their say.

## **Business Negotiation**

- Hierarchy is the cornerstone of Italian business. Italians respect power and age.
- Always adhere to your verbal agreements. Failing to follow through on a commitment will destroy a business relationship.
- Heated debates and arguments often erupt in meetings. This is simply a function of the free-flow of ideas.

## **GREEK COMMUNITY**

**Greek Community Centre of Montréal/  
Hellenic Community of Montréal**  
5757 Wilderton (Montreal)  
Montréal H3S 2V7  
514-738-2421 # 120/514-738-3127

5220 Grande Allée (South Shore)  
St. Hubert  
J3Y 1A1  
450-656-4832

Access to social services, interpretation  
and translation, information Individual/family  
support, cultural, housing, poverty,  
education, daycares

**Hellenic Benevolent Society**  
5757 Wilderton  
Montréal  
H3S 2K8  
514-344-1666

Access to social services, interpretation and translation, information and orientation.

### **Greetings**

Hello: yasa  
Goodbye: andio  
Good morning: kalimera  
Good afternoon: herete  
Good evening: kalispera  
Good night: kalinihta  
Please: parakalo  
Thank you: efharisto  
Yes: ne  
No: ohi  
Sorry: sighnomi  
How are you?: Ti kanete?  
I'm well thanks: kala efharisto  
What's your name?: pos sas lene  
My name is.: me lene.

**Shield of Athena**  
514-274-8117 Montréal  
450-688-6584 Laval  
Community support, shelters, family violence

**Hellenic Social Services**  
Nancy Papadopoulos  
514-381-1881

**St. Dionysios Greek Orthodox  
Community (Attached to Church)**  
7707 boul Lasalle  
Montréal  
H8P 1Y5  
514-368-5442

## **Greek Culture**

### **Family Values**

- The family is the basis of the social structure.
- The family offers both financial and emotional support to its members.
- The extended family is expected to help relatives in times of need, even to the point of assisting them to find employment.
- The wrongdoing of one family member brings dishonour to the entire family.

### **Relationships & Communication**

- Nepotism is not viewed negatively and it is very common for relatives to work for the same company.
- Greeks prefer face-to-face meetings
- Never say or do anything that can be construed as challenging the honour or integrity.
- Under no circumstances should you publicly question someone's statements.
- If your Greek client becomes quiet and withdrawn, you may have said or done something to upset them
- Meetings are often interrupted. Several people may speak at the same time.

### **Business Negotiation**

- Greeks respect age and position.
- Business is conducted slowly. You will have to be patient
- Imposing a deadline on reaching a decision may offend.

### **Religion in Greece**

- The Greek Orthodox Church is the national religion and is practiced by the majority of the population.
- Religion is integral to daily life and is evidenced in the respect for hierarchy and view of the family as a single unit of strength.
- Younger people are not as devout church-goers as their parents and grandparents
- Easter is the major religious holiday and the celebration is more important to most Greeks than Christmas.

## **FILIPINO COMMUNITY**

### **Federation of Filipino Canadians Association of Quebec**

6555 Cote Des Neiges #255  
Montréal  
H3S 2A6  
514-341-2122

### **Philippine Women's Centre of Quebec**

4180 ave de Courtrai  
#308  
Montréal  
H3S 1C3  
514-678-3901

### **Filipino Women's Organization in Quebec (Pinay)**

7595 Central Avenue  
Lasalle, Québec  
H8P 1K8  
514-364-9833  
[pinaycan@yahoo.com](mailto:pinaycan@yahoo.com)

Employment/human rights training, legal services, skills training, advocacy

### **Tagalog Basics**

Good morning: Magandang umaga hô. (formal)  
Magandang umaga. (informal)

Good morning (response): Magandang umaga naman ho.

Good afternoon: Magandang hapon hô.

Good evening: Magandang gabi hô.

Hello: Kumusta hô.

Goodbye: Paalam na hô.

Yes: Ohô/Opô.

No: Hindi hô.

Excuse me: Mawaláng-galang na nga hô

Sorry: Iskyua/Sori hô

Thank you (very much): (Maráming) salamat hô

You're welcome: Waláa hong anuman.

What's your name?: Anóng pangalan ninyó?

My name is.: Akó si.

## **Filipino Culture**

### **Filipino Family Values**

- The family is the centre of the social structure and includes the nuclear family, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and honorary relations such as godparents, sponsors, and close family friends.
- People get strength and stability from their family. As such, many children have several godparents.
- Concern for the extended family is seen in the patronage provided to family members when they seek employment.

## **Filipino Concept of Shame**

- *Hiya* is shame and is a motivating factor behind behaviour.
- It is a sense of social propriety and conforming to societal norms of behaviour.
- Filipinos believe they must live up to the accepted standards of behaviour and if they fail to do so they bring shame not only upon themselves, but also upon their family.
- If someone is publicly embarrassed, criticized, or does not live up to expectations, they feel shame and lose self-esteem.

## **Relationships & Communication**

- Filipinos thrive on interpersonal relationships.
- Once a relationship has been developed it is with you personally.
- Presenting the proper image will facilitate building business relationships. Dress conservatively and well at all times.

## **Meeting Etiquette**

- Punctuality is expected. For the most part your Filipino colleagues will be punctual as well.
- Face-to-face meetings are preferred.
- Always accept any offer of food or drink.
- It is important to remain for the period of social conversation at the end of the meeting.

## **Negotiation**

- Filipinos avoid confrontation if at all possible. It is difficult for them to say 'no'. Likewise, their 'yes' may merely mean 'perhaps'.
- At each stage of the negotiation, try to get agreements in writing to avoid confusion or misinterpretation.
- Decisions are often reached on the basis of feelings rather than facts, which is why it is imperative to develop a broad network of personal relationships.

## **JEWISH COMMUNITY**

In general, a person can be considered "Jewish" whether he adheres to a complete belief system or not. Being a Jew simply put, is anyone born to a Jewish mother. The religion of the father is irrelevant. The term "Jewish" can be used also to describe a race and a culture rather than a religion, so some who identify themselves as Jewish may have little interest in the beliefs and practices associated with the religious aspects. Two sub-groups of Jews are Sephardic (who are of Spanish/Middle Eastern descent and often are Francophone) and Ashkenazi (who are German/European descent). A Jew from either of these sub-groups can associate with any of the religious affiliations below but often the Sephardic communities have their own synagogues which tend to be Orthodox in their traditions. There are slight differences in their traditions, cultures and foods each reflective of their differing countries of origin. Another group who are rare in Montreal are the Jews from Ethiopia and Northern Africa. There was an influx of immigration to Israel which began in 1977 and continued into the 90's due to the famine and civil climate in Ethiopia.

In traditional Judaism, women are for the most part seen as separate but equal. Women's obligations and responsibilities are different from men's but seen as just as important. A woman's role is to take care of the children and the home. Decision-making in relation to the home and children is their decision where all other decisions are left to the husband often in consultation with the Rabbi.

Sabbath (Shabbat) begins Friday at sundown and last until Saturday night at sundown. Depending on the time of year the Sabbath may begin earlier or later. During the winter months, Friday afternoons would be impossible for observant Jewish families to have meetings or discuss any business. During the summer, there would be a bit more leeway but it would be wise to ask your client what works for them. During the Sabbath they are unable to use any electricity, telephones, listen to radio, watch TV, work, spend money, drive or be driven. An observant family will make no exceptions (except for health reasons).

There are also a number of Jewish holidays throughout the year with varying degrees of observances and traditions some that include the need to fast and/or to attend synagogue and not work. Please refer to a calendar for specifics or ask your client. The holiest of days are Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) that is in the early fall months (usually September-October). On these days even the least observant Jews will follow the traditions. Two rituals that for the most part transcend all levels of the religion are the Bar Mitzvah and Briss. A Bar Mitzvah is a religious ritual that is held when a boy turns 13 – his segway to becoming a man. The Briss is the circumcision of a male child at 7 days old. A female child can have a Bat Mitvah at 12 years of age but these are held only in the less Orthodox sects of the community.

### **Reform Judaism**

Reform Judaism is the most liberal expression of Judaism. During prayer men and women can sit together. There is the least amount of traditional observances for the Jews who follow these practices.

## Conservative Judaism

Conservative Judaism may be said to be a moderate position between Orthodox and Reform Judaism. It seeks to conserve the traditional elements of Judaism, while allowing for modernization to a less radical extent than Reform Judaism. Observances of holidays and traditions (keeping Kosher, attending synagogue on the Sabbath or holidays...) vary in degree among families and can even be among each member of a specific family. For the most part, during prayer men and women can sit together in synagogue.

## Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Judaism is the most traditional expression of modern Judaism. Orthodox Jews believe the entire Torah was given to Moses by God at Sinai and remains authoritative for modern life in its entirety. They may follow the laws of Kashreut (Kosher) which include eating specific foods only with the labels COR, MK, U to name a few. Being Kosher means not eating pork, mixing anything dairy with anything meat and not eating seafood (excluding fish) and meat from certain animals. During prayer women and men can not sit together. They would follow most of the rules of the traditional religious and societal rules however dress more secularly and may live and work among the secular population. Men may wear head coverings (yarmulke), and women may cover their heads with a wig or scarf.

## Ultra Orthodox Judaism (Hasidim, Lubavitch)

This is a more extreme form of Orthodox Judaism with the emphasis on living their lives completely separate from secular society. Men will always cover their heads with small skullcaps (yarmulke) in addition to black fedoras and long black coats. They have beards and may have long sideburns that are curled called (payess). These may be visible or placed behind their ears. They will wear a prayer shawl under their clothes which are white shirts and black pants. The prayer shawl has long braided strings that may or may not hang out of their shirts (tzitzis). Married women cover their hair as a sign of humility. It can be covered by either a wig or scarf. The dress for women is conservative and in general they cover their arms (to elbows) and legs with a long skirt. Never pants. Praying in Synagogues for men and women is always done separately.

Marriages are arranged by the parents and usually at young adult ages. When meeting occurs between members of the opposite sex there is never touching between men and women. A woman will not meet a male stranger alone. Families produce as many children as God will provide. A young boy's hair is not cut until 3 years old and the haircut involves a celebration. They live in their own community and rarely step out into the secular community. They do not listen to the secular music or watch secular TV. Prayers are said three times a day. Boys and girls go to school but higher academics are reserved for boys (yeshiva) as girls are to marry and produce children. The children attend schools in their own community. The Rabbi in the community holds great power and the community will look to him for guidance in all areas.

The community is generally distrusting of the world outside of their own. Open discussions about what transpires in families are frowned upon. Even within the family open discussion is rare

therefore issues of abuse, criminal activities are usually denied even if confronted with overwhelming evidence. Languages spoken are Yiddish and English. Some of the younger generations are attempting to make links with the secular communities - this is often frowned upon by the elders and the young adult may be denounced as a family member if they stray too far. Kosher food is eaten—no mixing of dairy and meat, no pork, certain cuts of meat from certain animals no seafood, only foods marked with certain symbols U, MK, COR to name a few. Areas they may live in are Outremont, Boisbriand, Ste. Agathe, Van Horne, and Cote St Luc.

During appointments dress must be conservative and especially for female interveners arms and legs must be covered. Shoulders, upper-arms and knees should not be visible.

The Montreal Jewish Magazine  
[www.montrealjewishmagazine.com](http://www.montrealjewishmagazine.com)  
[www.jewishinmontreal.com](http://www.jewishinmontreal.com)

## **LATIN COMMUNITY**

### **Guyanese-Quebec Socio-Cultural Association**

PO Box 484 Jean Talon  
Montréal  
H1S 2Z4  
514-326-3257

Advocacy, information, referrals,  
interpretation and translation. Languages  
spoken Creole, Spanish, Italian

### **Spanish Social Centre of Montréal**

7414 de la Roche  
Montréal  
H2R 2T5  
514-274-9887

Social support services, training programs  
for youth, employment preparation  
support, advocacy, information and referrals

### **Corporation Culturelle Latino-Americaine De L'Amité (COCLA)**

1357 Saint Louis  
Montréal, Quebec  
H4L 2P4  
Tel: 514-748-0796  
[cocla1@ca.inter-net](mailto:cocla1@ca.inter-net)

Offers guidance, cultural events, support, friendship and emergency help  
[www.montrealhispano.net](http://www.montrealhispano.net) and [www.tuguialatina.com](http://www.tuguialatina.com)

Great websites that has list of all resources and services offered to the Hispanic community  
including doctors, job banks etc.

### **Spanish Greetings**

Hello: Hola!  
Goodbye: Adiós!  
Yes: Si  
No: No  
Please: Por favor  
Thank you: Gracias  
You're welcome: De nada  
Excuse me: Perdón

## **MIDDLE EASTERN COMMUNITIES**

### **Amal Centre for Women**

903 boul Décarie  
Suite 204  
Montréal, Québec  
H4L 3N3  
514-855-0330  
[amalwomencenter@yahoo.ca](mailto:amalwomencenter@yahoo.ca)

Counselling, advocacy, food baskets, support in the field of family welfare and community focusing primarily on Muslim women and children. Will provide care baskets, translators, Halal meat and follow-up for Muslim women in shelters who need specialized support and services.

### **Info Islam Montréal**

1600 boul St. Laurent  
Montréal H2X 2T1  
514-285-8583

### **Montréal Muslims**

[www.montrealmuslims.ca](http://www.montrealmuslims.ca)  
(great website with all services, orgs etc..)

### **Services Sociaux**

860 Decarie #304  
St. Laurent H4L 3M1  
514-748-5303

### **Iranian Cultural and Community Centre**

3680 Jeanne Mance #323  
Montréal  
H2X 2K5  
514-842-4626  
Social support services, free French courses, interpretation and translation, advocacy, information, speak Farsi and Persian

### **Canadian Muslim Forum**

CP 1652 Succ St. Laurent  
Montréal  
H4L 4Z2  
514-624-9862/450-445-3658

Provides information to schools on Muslim religious practices and education, issues related to the integration of Muslim students in schools

### **Islamic Community Centre**

5905 boul La Grande Allée  
Brossard J4W 1A1  
450-656-9841  
[www.iccbrossard.com](http://www.iccbrossard.com)

### **Traduction Trilingue**

11820 Grenet #39  
St. Laurent, Québec  
514-331-3635

### **Centre D'études Arabes pour le**

Développement (CEADS)  
3720 ave. Parc # 300  
Montréal, Québec  
H2X 2J1  
514-982-6606 #2238  
Employment counselling workshops, job banks, advice, information, referrals, preparation for the workforce.

### **The Islamic Centre of Quebec**

2520 Laval Rd.  
St. Laurent  
H4L 3A1  
514-331-1770/514-331-5582

Social services and activities, youth programs, welfare support, Islamic education

## **Afghan Women's Centre of Montréal**

Makai Aref - Director

514-312-7074

514-995-5507

## **Canadian Islamic Centre – Al- Jamieh**

241 rue Anselme-Lavigne

Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Québec

H9A 3H6

(514) 624-5833

[info@cical-jamieh.com](mailto:info@cical-jamieh.com)

Daycare Service, Friday Prayer, Institute of Islamic and Arabic studies, Saturday School

## **Greetings Basics**

Hello: as-salam alaykum

Hello (response): wa alaykum e-salam

Goodbye (person leaving): ma'a salama

Goodbye (person staying): alla ysalmak

Good morning: sabaH ala-kheir

Good afternoon: masa' al-kheir

Good night: tisbaH ala-kheir

Welcome: ahlan wa sahlan OR marHaba

## **Iranian Culture**

Iran has a heterogeneous population speaking a variety of Indo-Iranian, Semitic, and Turkic languages.

## **Islam and Shi'ism**

Islam is practised by the majority of Iranians and governs their personal, political, economic and legal lives. Islam emanated from what is today Saudi Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad is seen as the last of God's emissaries (following in the footsteps of Jesus, Moses, Abraham, etc) to bring revelation to mankind. The Quran and the actions of the Prophet (the Sunnah) are used as the basis for all guidance in the religion.

Among certain obligations for Muslims are to pray five times a day - at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening. Friday is the Muslim holy day. During the holy month of Ramadan all Muslims must fast from dawn to dusk and are only permitted to work six hours per day. Fasting includes no eating, drinking, cigarette smoking, or gum chewing. Each night at sunset, families and friends gather together to celebrate the breaking of the fast (iftar). The festivities often continue well into the night. In general, things happen more slowly during Ramadan.

Iran is the only country of all Muslim countries that is officially a Shi'ite state. The others being considered Sunni states.

### **Family Values**

- In Iran, the family is the basis of the social structure.
- The concept of family is more private than in many other cultures. Female relatives must be protected from outside influences and are taken care of at all times. It is inappropriate to ask questions about an Iranian's wife or other female relatives.
- Iranians take their responsibilities to their family quite seriously.
- Families tend to be small, only 1 or 2 children, but the extended family is quite close.
- Elderly relatives are kept at home, not placed in a nursing home.
- Loyalty to the family comes before other social relationship, even business.

## **Public vs. Private**

- Iranians see themselves as having two distinct identities: "zaher" (public) and "batin" (private).
- When they are in public, they must conform to accepted modes of behaviour. It is only within their homes among their inner circle that they feel free to be themselves. Family members are always part of the inner circle.
- The inner circle forms the basis of a person's social and business network. Friendship is very important and extends into business. The people from the inner circle can be relied upon to offer advice.

## **Taarof (Iranian Politeness)**

- Taarof is a system of politeness that includes both verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Iranians protest compliments and attempt to appear vulnerable in public.
- They will belittle their own accomplishments in an attempt to appear humble, although other Iranians understand that this is merely courteous and do not take the words at face value.
- In adherence to taarof, if you are ever offered something, like a tea or sweet, even if you want it, at first decline it until their insistence becomes greater.

## **Relationships & Communication**

- Iranians prefer to do business with those they know and respect, therefore they expect to spend time cultivating a personal relationship before business is conducted.
- Expect to be offered tea whenever you meet someone, as this demonstrates hospitality.
- Iranians judge people on appearances.

## **Meeting Etiquette**

- Appointments are necessary.
- Meetings are generally not private unless there is a need to discuss matters confidentially. In general, Iranians have an open-door policy, even when they are in a meeting. This means you may experience frequent interruptions. Others may even wander into the room and start a different discussion.
- It is a good idea to avoid scheduling meetings during (Ramadan) as the need to fast would preclude your client from offering you hospitality.
- Arrive at meetings on time, since punctuality is seen as a virtue.
- Be patient - meetings are frequently interrupted.
- Do not look at your watch or try to rush the meeting. If you appear fixated on the amount of time the meeting is taking, you will not be trusted.

## **Negotiating**

- Decisions are made slowly.
- Iranians are deliberate negotiators.
- Do not use high-pressure tactics.
- Iranians may display emotion, or even walk out of the meeting, or threaten to terminate the relationship in an attempt to convince you to change your position.

## **Egyptian Culture**

Arabic is the written and spoken language of Egypt.

### **Islam**

Islam is practised by the majority of Egyptians and governs their personal, political, economic and legal lives. (See above description)

### **Family Values**

- The family is the most significant unit of Egyptian society.
- Kinship plays an important role in all social relations.
- The individual is always subordinate to the family, tribe or group.
- Nepotism is viewed positively, since it is patronage of one's family.
- The family consists of both the nuclear and the extended family.

### **Egyptian Honour**

- Honour is an important facet of interpersonal relationships.
- Respect and esteem for people is both a right and an obligation.
- An individual's honour is intricately entwined with the reputation and honour of everyone in their family.
- Honour requires that Egyptians demonstrate hospitality to friends and guests.
- It also dictates that people dress as well as their financial circumstances allow, and show proper respect and deference to their elders and those in authority.
- A man's word is considered his bond and to go back on your word is to bring dishonour to your family.

### **Social Class**

- Social class is very apparent in Egypt since it determines your access to power and position.
- The social class an Egyptian is born into dictates their everyday life and the opportunities they will have.
- Status is defined more by family background than by absolute wealth.
- There is little social mobility.

### **Meeting Etiquette**

- Greetings are based on both class and the religion of the person.
- Handshakes are the customary greeting among individuals of the same sex.
- Handshakes are somewhat limp and prolonged, although they are always given with a hearty smile and direct eye contact.
- In any greeting between men and women, the woman must extend her hand first. If she does not, a man should bow his head in greeting.
- Appointments are necessary.

- Meetings are generally not private unless there is a need to discuss matters confidentially. In general, Egyptians have an open-door policy, even when they are in a meeting. This means you may experience frequent interruptions. Others may even wander into the room and start a different discussion.

## **Relationships & Communication**

- Expect to be offered coffee or tea whenever you meet someone, as this demonstrates hospitality. Even if you do not take a sip, always accept the beverage. Declining the offer is viewed as rejecting the person.
- Since Egyptians judge people on appearances wear conservative clothes.
- Egyptians believe direct eye contact is a sign of honesty and sincerity, so be prepared for disconcertingly intense stares.
- Egyptians are emotive and use hand gestures when they are excited. In general, they speak softly, although they may also shout or pound the table. This is not indicative of anger; it is merely an attempt to demonstrate a point.
- You should demonstrate deference to the most senior person in the group, who may also be their spokesperson. This is a country where hierarchy and rank are very important.

## **Negotiation**

- The social side of business is very important. Business is hierarchical.
- Decisions are reached after great deliberation and negotiation.
- Egyptians do not like confrontation and abhor saying 'no'. If they do not respond, it usually is a negative sign.

## **Lebanese Culture**

### **Language in Lebanon**

Lebanon's Constitution states that "Arabic is the official national language. A law determines the cases in which the French language may be used". The majority of Lebanese people speak Arabic and either French or English fluently.

### **The People**

The population is generally viewed in terms of religion. The predominant differences between people are those between Muslim and Christian sects. The proportion of each is politically sensitive so estimates from different sources vary widely. Muslims do not eat pork or drink alcohol.

### **Religion(s)**

Lebanon is a religious mish-mash and this has ultimately been the cause behind social tensions and the long, drawn out civil war. The government officially recognizes 18 religious sects of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Religion affects almost all areas of culture. Family laws such as divorce, separation, child custody, and inheritance are handled in religious courts and there is not a uniform system for all citizens.

### **Loyalty to a Group**

A person's name and honour are their most cherished possessions. This extends also to the family and wider group. Therefore the behaviour of individual family members is viewed as the direct responsibility of the family. It is crucial for the Lebanese to maintain their dignity, honour, and reputation.

The Lebanese strive to avoid causing another person public embarrassment. This can be seen when they agree to perform a favour for a friend to maintain that friend's honour even if they know that they will not do what is asked.

### **Greeting People**

Greetings in Lebanon are an interesting mix of both the French and Muslim/Arab cultures. A warm and welcoming smile accompanied by a handshake while saying "Marhaba" is a greeting that can be given without causing offense.

Take time when greeting a person and be sure to ask about their family, health, etc. If man is greeting a Muslim woman you may find that some women do shake hands; it is best to see if a hand is extended or not first.

Very religious Muslims may not shake hands across genders. In such cases, people should simply nod their heads as a way of acknowledging them. If someone is introduced with a title, use that title when greeting them.

Guests are generally served tea or coffee immediately. Good manners dictate that such offers are accepted; never reject such an offer as this may be viewed as an insult.

### **Communication Styles**

The Lebanese are very "touchy-feely". Direct eye contact with a lot of physical contact is the cornerstones of Lebanese communication. Try not to break the eye contact as this conveys trust, sincerity and honesty. However, interestingly the situation is reversed when dealing with elders where prolonged direct eye contact is considered rude and challenging.

Lebanese have an indirect and non-confrontational communication style, which relates to the need to maintain personal honour. They rely heavily on the context to explain the underlying meaning of their words. The listener is expected to know what they are trying to say or imply. Non-verbal cues and body language are crucial to learn so you can more fully understand the responses you are given. For the most part, Lebanese try not to lose their tempers publicly since such behaviour demonstrates a weakness of character. They strive to be courteous and expect similar behaviour from others. However, if they think that their honour has been impugned or that their personal honour has been challenged, they will raise their voice and employ sweeping hand gestures in their attempt to restore their honour.

## **Meetings**

- Punctuality is expected.
- Meetings generally begin with the offer of tea or coffee. While this is being sipped, it is important to engage in some chitchat. This is important in order to establish rapport and trust.
- Meetings are not necessarily private. The Lebanese tend to have an open-door policy, which means that people may walk in and out, telephone calls may be answered. It is best to be prepared for frequent interruptions.

## **Iraqi Culture**

### **The People**

The Iraqi population includes a number of ethnic groups, about 77% of whom are Arabs, 19% Kurds, and the rest a variety of different groups, including Turkomans, Assyrians, and Armenians. There is also a distinct sub-group of Iraqi Arabs, called the Ma'dan or Marsh Arabs, who inhabit miles of marshy area just above the point at which the Tigris and Euphrates join together.

### **Religion**

The majority of Iraqis are Muslims regardless of ethnicity. Its position in Iraq went through a transition during Saddam Hussein's regime as the state shifted from a secular one to a more Islamic focussed orientation.

Regardless of orientation, Islam prescribes a way of life and it governs political, legal, and social behaviour. (See description above)

### **Hospitality**

Hospitality is an Arab and Muslim tradition deeply engrained in the culture. Visitors are treated as kings and must always be fed and looked after. Invitations to a home must be seen as a great honour and never turned down.

### **Family and Honour**

Iraqis consider family and honour to be of paramount importance. The extended family or tribe is both a political and social force. Families hold their members responsible for their conduct, since any wrongdoing brings shame to the entire family. Loyalty to the family comes before other social relationships, even business.

Nepotism is not viewed negatively; in such a culture it naturally makes more sense to offer jobs to family as they are trusted.

It is common for large extended families to live in the same house. In urban areas, families do not necessarily live in the same house, although they generally live close by.

## **Meeting and Greeting**

- Iraqis are relatively formal in their business dealings.
- The common Arabic greeting is "asalaamu alaikum" (peace be with you), to which you should respond "wa alaikum salaam" (and peace be with you).
- The most common business greeting is the handshake with direct eye contact.
- Handshakes can be rather prolonged; try not to be the first person to remove your hand.
- Men should wait to see if a woman extends her hand.
- Expect interruptions during meetings when phone calls may be taken or people enter the room on other matters. This should not be seen negatively; one should simply remain patient and wait for matters to return to them.

## **Communication Styles**

The need to save face and protect honour means that showing emotions is seen negatively. Displays of anger are a serious no-no. If you must show disapproval it is always best to do so one-to-one, quietly and with tact.

Always keep your word. Do not make a promise or guarantee unless you can keep it. If you want to show a commitment to something but do not want to make caste iron assurances then employ terms such as "I will do my best," "We will see," or the local term "insha-Allah" (God willing).

Iraqi businesspeople are not afraid of asking blunt and probing questions. These may be about you, your agency or its intentions.

## **NATIVE/ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY**

### **Native Women's Shelter**

514-933-4688

### **Northern Module**

6195 St. Jacques West

Montréal

H4B 1T7

514-932-9047

Interpretation and transportation services to patients and their families while they are in Montreal. Access to social workers and advocacy to ensure services are received

### **First People's House**

McGill University

3505 Peel

Montréal

H3A 1W7

514-398-3217

Community Outreach

### **Association of Montreal Inuit (Makavik)**

514-745-8880

Monthly feasts and other activities, cultural, provide funding for children to complete education, preserve culture.

### **Quebec Native Women Inc.**

450-632-0088

[www.pauktuutit.ca/pdf/publications/pauktuutit/InuitWay](http://www.pauktuutit.ca/pdf/publications/pauktuutit/InuitWay)

**Very good website ...description of Inuit culture, customs etc.**

### **Inuktitut Basics**

Thank you	Qujannamiik
How are you?	Qanuipit
What is your name?	Kinauvit
You're welcome	Liaali
Goodbye (individual)	Tavvauvitit
Goodbye (many)	Tavvauvusi

### **Native (Aboriginal) Friendship Centre**

2001 boul St. Laurent

Montréal

H2X 2T3

514-5-499-1854

[info@nfc.org](mailto:info@nfc.org)

Urban multipurpose aboriginal centre, homeless project, health services and information, youth programs/centre

### **Centre for Native Education**

1455 de Maisonneuve O # H 641

Montréal

H3G 1M8

514-848-2424 #7326

Resource centre, support services, advocacy.

### **Tasiutigiiit – Association of Cross Cultural Families of Inuit and Native Children**

514-412-4455

### **Aboriginal Healing Clinic**

514-398-2129

## **Mohawk Basics**

Hello	Kwe
Thank you	Nia:wen
Good-bye	O:nen
Hello, how are you?	Kwe Kwe skennenko:wa ken?
Yes	Hen
I don't know	To: ka

## **Cree Basics**

Hello – How are you	Ta'nisi
Thank you	Kinana'skomitin
Good-bye	Ki'htwa'm ka-wa'pamitin
Yes	e'he
No	mo'na

## **The Child's Spirit**

Traditionally aboriginal children enjoy a substantial amount of freedom, as indicated by the fact that when they are not in school, children stay up much later; they are often fed when they are hungry and not according to a set meal schedule, and are disciplined in a non-traditional manner by their parents. To deny food to someone when it is available does not make sense to the Native people. This became common perhaps as a reaction to their elders who experienced starvation. To an outsider, Inuit parents may appear indifferent or overly lax with their children. For adolescents there is rarely pressure placed on them to pursue their formal education or to find a full-time job. They are left to develop at their own pace and to decide what they want to do with their lives.

Aboriginals believe that when a child is born, the 'soul' or spirit of a recently deceased relative is taken on by the newborn. The newborn is then named after this relative. Since the child is, in a sense, part of the person after whom they have been named, they are deserving of the same respect and treatment as this person received while they were alive. This means that the child knows when they are hungry or tired and in general what they want. It would not be considered appropriate, under these circumstances, to tell a child what to do, as this would be the equivalent of ordering an elder about, thus violating an important social rule in Inuit culture.

## **Discipline**

These beliefs regarding children have resulted in Native parents allowing their children much greater degree of freedom than most non-Inuit would be comfortable with. As long as they do not harm themselves, other people, or damage important items, there are few limits placed on the activities of children. This should not be interpreted as the parents being overly permissive, because the practice includes certain limitations as well. For example, a child may receive affectionate cuddling or choice bits of food when he requests it, however, a child who is pouting or throwing a tantrum may be ignored. To do otherwise would be considered intrusive and would possibly slow the development of

the child's ability to reason. A large amount of freedom does not mean that Inuit children are not disciplined. Young children will be restrained if they persist in a potentially dangerous activity. Subtle verbal clues by older members of the family indicate to the child when their behaviour is inappropriate. Teasing, shaming, mocking even ostracization are traditionally used as effective means of drawing attention to a child's poor behaviour. Older children are rarely physically disciplined but when this does occur it is more often an expression of the parent's frustration or anger than a real effort to change the child's behaviour. A more effective means of guiding an older child is to talk to another person about the child's behaviour within hearing distance of the child rather than to have a direct confrontation. Children are cherished by the Aboriginals. Households who do not have children are considered to be unfortunate and cold. Women often will continue to have children right up to menopause. When children grow older, they continue to provide valuable assistance in maintaining the household and helping to support their parents in their old age. The youngest child is considered to be 'charming' and receives an unending flow of affectionate attention and indulgences. In a culture where expression of affection is restrained, young children and babies provide an outlet for relatively uninhibited demonstrations of affection.

If a woman becomes pregnant, there will likely be some pressure for the couple to marry. No stigma is attached to children who are born out of recognized unions. In cases where the mother is very young or cannot look after the child, grandparents often assume responsibility for looking after the child. Elder family members continue to play an important role in family life and are treated with great respect. They are considered wise and essential sources of knowledge. They are often sought for their advice on many issues. Children are taught to be respectful towards their elders, to greet them before anyone else, to try and anticipate their needs. As well as being the primary caregiver, women run the home. This includes cleaning the house and the family's clothing, cooking, childcare and making and repairing clothing. Many are also now the primary income earners in their families.

## **Kinship**

Kinship played an integral role in the structure of Aboriginal communities and is rooted in the traditional society. Kinship bonds were established by birth, marriage, adoption, and by sharing a name with someone. There were also a variety of 'fictive kinship' relations that would further bind people together who were not otherwise related. These bonds ensured that virtually all the people in the camp were related to each other in some way. Combined with an intricate system of reciprocal obligations and responsibilities, the community was tightly knit and interdependent.

One of the most important and respected characteristics of a successful person is their capacity for self-reliance and their ability to meet life's challenges with innovation, resourcefulness and perseverance. To show frustration or anger is considered a childish response. An adult would be expected to either solve the problem, or, if the problem seems unsolvable, accept it as such. Of course, this can lead to frustration on the part of both the Inuk seeking help and the official or health professional attempting to help them. Inuit also feel that tact and humility are important qualities of an independent adult. Competitive behaviour and boasting about one's accomplishments is considered ill-mannered because in effect, the person would be calling attention to the relative successes or failures of others.

## **Adoption**

This fluidity of bonds between adults and children extends into adoption practices. A child who loses his natural parents carries no stigma in the Native society. Orphans are readily accepted into another household, usually that of a close relative. There are also other methods of adopting children. For example, if a couple were unable to have children themselves, they could ask another couple who had several children, if they could adopt the next child they had. This request would usually be made via the elders of the adoptive parents. Generally, the elder would initially make such a request to close relatives but if this avenue proved fruitless, they could try more distant relatives or friends. Once adopted into the new family, the child would know who their biological parents were but their primary loyalty would be to the adoptive parents. The biological mother would often retain a special relationship with the child and often play an active role in their lives. **Traditional adoption practices officially recognized by the government apply ONLY to the Inuit people.**

## **Non -Interference**

The Aboriginals place a high regard on the right of individuals to lead their lives free from interference from others. This belief strongly affects their interaction with each other. Basically, this belief causes an Inuit to often feel a certain degree of discomfort when exercising authority over another, even if the position they hold necessitates such authority. Natives are also unlikely to welcome someone trying to dictate their actions to them or to speak for them without their consent. This emphasis on the non-interference in the affairs of others is taught early in life. When children begin to show signs of maturity, they are encouraged to be considerate towards other people and to not impose themselves on others. Aboriginals often find it uncomfortable to respond to direct questions concerning other people and their motives. It is considered a violation of that person's privacy to speak about them in their absence.

## **Communication Styles**

Inuit believe that they are able to change their minds easily without consequence. This practice can lead to difficulties when Inuit interact with formal agreements. An Inuk may fully intend to comply with the original agreement, schedule or appointment, but according to traditional Inuit values each person maintains the right to change their mind. Inuit will not think twice about not attending an appointment or meeting and will not think to cancel due to this belief that they each individual has the free will to change their minds without consequence. Direct questions and answers are difficult for the Aboriginal population. They naturally avoid confrontation and embarrassment so as not to make another feel uncomfortable. Traditionally communication is passive and it is assumed by the Native person that the other will inherently be able to read their minds. Communication among the Native people is not linear, that is, it is not always necessary to respond when spoken to. If someone is asked something which they have to think about they may not respond right away and may even change the subject, only later on answering the question that was asked. Silence or a shrug are extremely prevalent and does not carry a negative connotation. Conversation is not made for the sake of talking. If a person has nothing to say, they will remain silent. If they do not understand, they will remain silent for fear of hurting your feelings if they say that they do not understand. It is best to ask if all has been understood and explain that you will not be insulted. Humour is seen as a valuable communication tool in an interview setting.

## **Display of Emotions**

Natives tend not to display strong emotions publicly as this is considered immature. One may see a smiling and attentive Inuk but their underlying emotions may be quite different. Emotions are expressed more freely in small, more intimate groups. Inuit often express their emotions very subtly, in a tone of voice or the lifting of eyebrows. While appearing to be almost imperceptible to the stranger, they are adept at picking up the slight intonations and facial expressions from each other that reflect emotional states. For example an Inuit in an unfamiliar social or professional milieu will likely react by withdrawing socially, appearing shy while observing the situation carefully until they determine what the situation is and how they should behave. People who arrive unexpectedly, ask personal questions, and stay for only a short period of time, may find themselves considered aggressive and rude. If the visitor isn't clear in stating their intentions, they will find that the Aboriginal tend to be cautious about interacting with them. It is generally accepted that gratitude and a "thank you" are not spoken by the Inuit people; their participation at a next appointment or telephone call would be a manner in which their gratitude would be shown.

## **PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY**

### **Referral Centre: Santa Cruz Parish**

60 Rachel O  
Montréal J2G 8E9  
514-844-1011

### **Centre de L'Aider la Famille**

514-982-0804  
Contact : Manuela Pedroso  
Counselling, support, family Violence

### **Association Portugese du Canada**

4170 St. Urbain  
Montréal  
H2W 1V3  
514-844-2269

### **Centre Portugais de Reference and promotion Sociale**

32 boul. Saint-Joseph O  
Montréal  
H2T 2P3  
514-842-8045

French classes, socio-pedagogical support for children with behaviour problems and learning difficulties, training and education for parents, employment enhancement, cultural activities, individualized support and referrals

### **Basics**

Yes/No: Sim/Não

Maybe: Talvez

Please: Se faz favour/Por favor

Thank you: Obrigado/a

You're welcome: De nada

Excuse me: Desculpe

### **Greetings**

Hello: Bom dia

Good morning: Bom dia

Good evening: Boa tarde

Goodbye: Adeus

## **Portuguese Culture**

- The family is the foundation of the social structure and forms the basis of stability.
- The extended family is quite close.
- The individual derives a social network and assistance from the family.
- Loyalty to the family comes before other social relationships
- Portuguese are traditional and conservative.
- They are a people who retain a sense of formality when dealing with each other, which is displayed in the form of extreme politeness.

## **Hierarchy**

- Portugal is a culture that respects hierarchy.
- Both the Catholic Church and the family structure emphasize hierarchical relationships.
- People respect authority and look to those above them for guidance and decision-making.
- Rank is important, and those senior to you in rank must always be treated with respect.

## **Meeting Etiquette**

- You should arrive on time for meetings.
- In many circles, 5 minutes late is considered on time.
- Punctuality displays respect for the person you are meeting. If you are kept waiting, it is important that you not appear irritated.
- Decisions are not reached at meetings.
- Maintain eye contact when speaking.
- Meetings may be interrupted.
- Initial greetings are reserved, yet polite and gracious.
- The handshake accompanied by direct eye contact and the appropriate greeting for the time of day.

## **Negotiating**

- Portuguese put great importance on the character of the person with whom they do business, so they will take time to get to know you.
- Portuguese are very thorough and detail-oriented.
- Business is conducted slowly. You must not appear impatient.
- Contracts are respected.

## **RUSSIAN COMMUNITY**

### **Centre de Référence de la Communauté Russophone du Québec**

6767 Cote Des neiges  
Montréal H3S 2T6  
514-737-0090

### **Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral**

514-276-8322

### **Congress of Russian Speaking Communities of Quebec (CRCQ)**

[www.congressru.qc.ca](http://www.congressru.qc.ca)

### **St. Peter and St. Paul Russian Orthodox Cathedral**

1151 rue de Champlain  
Montréal H2L 2R7  
514-522-2801

### **Basics**

Good Morning: dobraye utra  
Good afternoon: dobryy den  
Good evening: dobryy vecher  
Goodbye (inf.): paka  
How are you?: Kak dila?  
Pleased to meet you: ochen priyatna  
Yes: da  
No: net  
Thank you: spasiba  
Pardon me: prastite  
I don't understand: ya ni panimayu  
What's your name?: kak vas zavut?  
My name is...: minya zavut.

## **Russian Culture**

### **The Russian Family**

- The Russian family is dependent upon all its members.
- Most families are small, often with only one child because most women must also work outside of the house in addition to bearing sole responsibility for household and childrearing chores.

### **Russian Pride**

- Russians are proud of their country.
- They accept that their lives are difficult and pride themselves on being able to flourish in conditions that others could not.
- They take great pride in their cultural heritage and expect the rest of the world to admire it.

## **Communal Mentality**

- This affinity for the group and the collective spirit remains today. It is seen in everyday life, for example most Russians will join a table of strangers rather than eat alone in a restaurant.
- Everybody's business is also everyone else's, so strangers will stop and tell someone that they are breaking the rules.

## **Relationships & Communication**

- Russians are transactional and do not need to establish long-standing personal relationships before they do business.
- Patience is essential.
- It is best to err on the side of formality when you first make contact.
- Most Russians do not trust people who are 'all business'.

## **Business Meeting Etiquette**

- You should arrive punctually for meetings.
- Typical Russian schedules are constantly changing and everything takes longer than expected, so be prepared to be kept waiting.
- Meetings can be cancelled on short notice.
- Meetings are frequently interrupted. It is common for several side conversations that have nothing to do with the topic of the meeting to be carried on during the meeting.
- The typical greeting is a firm, almost bone-crushing handshake while maintaining direct eye contact and giving the appropriate greeting for the time of day.
- When men shake hands with women, the handshake is less firm.

## **Business Negotiating**

- Hierarchy is important to Russians. They respect age, rank and position.
- Russians see negotiations as win-lose. They do not believe in win-win scenarios.
- Russians view compromise as weakness. They will continue negotiating until you offer concessions.
- Russians may lose their temper, walk out of the meeting, or threaten to terminate the relationship in an attempt to coerce you to change your position.
- Russians often use time as a tactic, especially if they know that you have a deadline.

## **SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY**

### **Pakistani Association of Montreal**

514-467-5138

### **Bharat Bhavan**

(Indian Community Centre)

4225 Notre Dame O

Montréal

(514)-937-6997 / 514-937-9802

692 Jean Talon O

Montréal

514-270-7500

Language classes, translation,  
accompaniment to appts, advocacy,  
cultural activities

### **SIARI (Service D'Intepretation et D'Aide aux Refuges Indochinois)**

6767 Cote Des Neiges #499

Montréal H3S 2B5

514-738-4763

[www.weblocal.ca/s-i-a-r-i-montreal-qc](http://www.weblocal.ca/s-i-a-r-i-montreal-qc)

Translation service, interpretation, advocacy  
for Tamil and Bengali

### **Bangladeshi Community of Quebec**

359 Gratton

St. Laurent

H4M 2C8

514-747-6695

### **Services Saera**

1115, Côte Vertu, app. 406

St-Laurent H4L 5M3

514-748-9751

Translation services, advocacy

### **Tamil Basics**

Hello: vanakkam

Goodbye: poytu varukirehn

Yes: aam

No: il-lay

Please: tayavura saydhih

Thank you: nandri

Excuse me: mannikavum

### **South Asian Women's Community Centre**

1035 Rachel Est

Montréal H3J 2J5

514-528-8812

Centre provides support to women and  
children including activities, language classes,  
job training, support groups, advocacy,  
interpretation.

### **Quebec Tamil Association**

(Tamilangam – Eelam)

4162 Van Horne

Montréal

H3S 1S1

514-342-3535

### **Tamil Women's Association of Quebec**

Tel:(514) 982-6606 Fax:(514) 982-6122

Website:

[www.southasians.ca](http://www.southasians.ca)

### **Association of Bangladeshi Refugees**

514-273-1751

### **Sri Lankan Association of Canada (Montreal)**

514-694-3508

### **Alliance of South Asian Communities**

6420 ave. Victoria

Montréal H3W 2S7

514-737-2722

Support, advocacy, activities for new immigrants

### **Bengali Basics**

Hello (Muslim): asalaam alaykum

Hello (Hindu): nomaashkaar

Good bye: khudaa hafiz

See you later: pore dakhaa hobe

Excuse me: maaf korun

Yes: ji

No: naa

Sorry: mannikavum

My name is...: en pay-yehr...

No problem: tik aache

How are you?: kaamon aachen?

I'm fine: bhaalo aahi

What's your name?: aapnaar naam ki?

How old are you?: koto boyosh?

I don't understand: aami bujhi naa

## **Hindi Basics**

Hello/Goodbye: Namaste

Excuse me: maaf kijiye

Please: meharbani she

Thank you: shukriya

Yes: haan

No: nahin

How are you?: aap kiaseh hain?

Very well, thank you: bahut acha, shukriya

What's your name?: aap ka shubh naam kya hai?

My name is.: meraa naam.hai

Do you speak English? Kya aap angrezi aatee hai?

I don't understand: meri samajh mei nahin aaya

## **Sri Lankan Basics**

Hello : hello

Bye: aayu-bowan

Yes: owu

No: naeh

Please: karuna kara

Thank you: stuh-tee

Excuse me: sama venna

Sorry: kana gaatui

How much is it?: ehekka keeyada?

My name is...: maaghe nama...

## **Sri Lankan Culture**

### **Religion**

- The main religions of Sri Lanka are Buddhism and Hinduism which both have large influences on political, cultural, and social life. Hindus do not eat beef.
- Buddhists make five promises: not to harm or kill any living things, not to steal or take anything that is not freely given, to control sexual desire, not to tell lies, not to drink alcoholic beverages or take drugs.
- Hinduism has two important beliefs, "samsara" (reincarnation and that actions in this life determine the status of the soul in the next incarnation) and "dharma" (caste or social class).
- Religion has both a direct and indirect impact on business; people will turn to religion when making decisions.

### **Hierarchy**

- The influences of Buddhism and Hinduism as well as the caste system have created a culture that operates within a hierarchical system.
- Sri Lankans are conscious of social order and status.
- All relationships to some extent involve hierarchies.
- At home, the patriarch (the father or oldest male in the household) is considered the leader of the family. All relationships within these circles are then based on upon people's positions within the hierarchy.

## Face

- Face, which can be described as honour or personal dignity, is extremely important to Sri Lankans.
- Face can be given or lost in social situations and it is important to avoid the latter.
- For example, publicly reprimanding or criticising someone would lead to a loss of face for both parties. As a result Sri Lankans are very conscious of protecting their and others' face at all times.
- This manifests in many ways. For example, many Sri Lankans will not feel comfortable making decisions since this may lead to failure which then leads to loss of face. Similarly, if asked a question to which the answer is "no" many Sri Lankans would prefer not to be so blunt and may give rather vague or uncommitted answers in order to avoid losing face.

## Meeting and Greeting

- The older generation of Sri Lankans will use the "namaste" (palms clasped together as if in prayer at chin level with a slight nod of the head).
- Tamils would say "vanakkam." (may you be blessed with a long life)
- In informal settings you may also hear "kuhomadu" (How do you do?).
- The younger people generally shake hands.
- Many Sri Lankan women will refrain from physical contact with a man outside their family so always wait to see if a woman extends her hand or not.
- When addressing people you should always use the appropriate title followed by the surname. Always wait for the other party to move to a first name basis.

## Communication

- Maintaining face is important for all communication.
- Do not put people in awkward positions or under pressure. Never openly criticise people.
- Sri Lankans are very non-confrontational in their communication style and it is important to try and read between the lines. They may say one thing but mean another and it is up to the listener to work out the message.
- Watch for long pauses, avoidance of eye contact or blatant tactics of evasion.

## Pakistani Culture

### Language in Pakistan

[Urdu](#) is the official language of Pakistan. Many other languages are spoken in Pakistan, including [Punjabi](#), Siraiki, Sindhi, Pashtu, Balochi, Hindko, Brahui, Burushaski, Balti, Khawar, Gujrati.

### Pakistani Society & Culture

#### Islam

Islam is practised by the majority of Pakistanis and governs their personal, political, economic and legal lives (see description above)

## **The Family**

- The extended family is the basis of the social structure and individual identity.
- It includes the nuclear family, immediate relatives, distant relatives, tribe members, friends, and neighbours.
- Loyalty to the family comes before other social relationships, even business. Nepotism is viewed positively, since it guarantees hiring people who can be trusted, which is crucial in a country where working with people one knows and trusts is of primary importance.
- The family is more private than in many other cultures.
- Female relatives are protected from outside influences. It is considered inappropriate to ask questions about a Pakistani's wife or other female relatives.
- Families are quite large by western standards, often having up to 6 children.

## **Hierarchical Society**

- Pakistan is a hierarchical society.
- People are respected because of their age and position.
- Older people are viewed as wise and are granted respect. In a social situation, they are served first and their drinks may be poured for them. Elders are introduced first, are provided with the choicest cuts of meat, and in general are treated much like royalty.
- Titles are very important and denote respect. It is expected that you will use a person's title and their surname until invited to use their first name.

## **Meeting and Greeting**

- Greetings are often between members of the same sex; however, at times greetings may be across gender.
- Men shake hands with each other. Once a relationship is developed, they may hug as well as shake hands.
- Pakistani names often include a name that denotes a person's class, tribe, occupation, or other status indicator.
- They may also include two names that have a specific meaning when used together, and the meaning is lost if the names are separated. It is best to ask a person how they wish to be addressed.
- In general, this is not a culture where first names are commonly used, except among close friends.

## **Building Relationships & Communication**

- You must not appear frustrated by what may appear to be purely social conversation. Pakistanis are hospitable.
- Pakistanis often ask personal questions as a way to get to know you as a person.
- Pakistanis do not require as much personal space as most western cultures. As such, they will stand close to you while conversing and you may feel as if your personal space has been violated. Do not back away.
- Pakistanis are generally indirect communicators.
- Always demonstrate deference to the most senior person in the group.

- In general, Pakistanis speak in a roundabout or circuitous fashion. Direct statements are made only to those with whom they have a long-standing personal relationship.
- Pakistanis prefer to converse in a non-controversial manner, so they will say they "will try" rather than admit that they cannot or will not be able to do something.
- Therefore, it is important to ask questions in several ways so you can be certain what was meant by a vague response. Silence is often used as a communication tool.

### **Meeting Etiquette**

- The best time to schedule meetings is in the late morning or early afternoon.
- If at all possible, try not to schedule meetings during Ramadan. You should arrive at meetings on time and be prepared to be kept waiting.
- It is not uncommon to have a meeting cancelled at the last minute.
- In general, Pakistanis have an open-door policy, even when they are in a meeting. This means there may be frequent interruptions. Other people may wander into the room and start a different discussion.
- Maintain indirect eye contact while speaking.

### **Negotiating**

- It often takes several visits to accomplish simple tasks.
- Pakistanis strive for win-win outcomes.
- Maintain indirect eye contact while speaking.

### **Indian Culture**

East India has three official languages - [Hindi](#), Urdu and [Bengali](#) - Central government decided that Hindi was to be the official language of India and therefore it also has the status of official language in the states.

### **Hierarchy**

- The influences of Hinduism and the tradition of the caste system have created a culture that emphasizes established hierarchical relationships.
- Indians are always conscious of social order and their status relative to other people, be they family, friends, or strangers.
- All relationships involve hierarchies. In schools, teachers are called gurus and are viewed as the source of all knowledge. The patriarch, usually the father, is considered the leader of the family. Every relationship has a clear-cut hierarchy that must be observed for the social order to be maintained.

### **The Role of the Family**

- People typically define themselves by the groups to which they belong rather than by their status as individuals. Someone is deemed to be affiliated to a specific state, region, city, family, career path, religion, etc.
- The extended family creates a myriad of interrelationships, rules, and structures. Along with these mutual obligations comes a deep-rooted trust among relatives.

## **Just Can't Say No**

- Indians do not like to express 'no,' be it verbally or non-verbally.
- Rather than disappoint you, for example, by saying something isn't available, Indians will offer you the response that they think you want to hear.
- This behaviour should not be considered dishonest. An Indian would be considered terribly rude if he did not attempt to give a person what had been asked.
- Since they do not like to give negative answers, Indians may give an affirmative answer but be deliberately vague about any specific details. This will require you to look for non-verbal cues, such as a reluctance to commit to an actual time for a meeting or an enthusiastic response.

## **Meeting Etiquette**

- This is a hierarchical culture, so greet the eldest or most senior person first.
- Men may shake hands with other men and women may shake hands with other women; however there are seldom handshakes between men and women because of religious beliefs. If you are uncertain, wait for them to extend their hand.
- Indians are non-confrontational. It is rare for them to overtly disagree. Decisions are reached by the person with the most authority.
- Decision making is a slow process.
- In general, Indians do not trust the legal system and someone's word is sufficient to reach an agreement.

## **Bangladeshi Culture**

The official language is [Bengali](#). Bengali is the first language of most of the population however many also speak English and [Urdu](#).

## **Bangladeshi Culture & Society**

### **Hierarchy**

- Bangladesh is a hierarchical society.
- People are respected because of their age and position.
- Older people are naturally viewed as wise and are granted respect.
- Bangladeshis expect the most senior male, by age or position, to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.

### **Religion**

- The majority of Bangladeshis are Muslim. However, most still very much mix this with pre-Islam folk traditions.
- Bangladeshis identify with the folk traditions of Bengali culture. This includes belief in shamanism and the powers of fakirs (Muslim holy men who are exorcists and faith healers), ojhaa (shamins with magical healing powers), and bauls (religious mendicants and wandering musicians).

## Meeting & Greeting

- Greetings usually take place between members of the same sex.
- The hand shake is common although they may feel rather limp.
- Women will only really be met within business contexts and even so, it is best to wait to see if a hand is extended before doing so.
- The traditional greeting for Muslims is Asalamu alaikum to which the response is wa alaikum salam.
- In general, age dictates how people are addressed. If people are of the same age, they use first names. If the person being addressed is older than the speaker, the person is called by their first name and a suffix that denotes the family relationship.

## Communication Styles

- Bangladeshis are quite implicit/indirect communicators. They tend to communicate in long, rich and contextualized sentences which only make sense when properly understood in relation to body language.
- It is important for people who come from implicit/direct cultures to understand that their communication styles may be seen as rude and the information provided inadequate.
- Personal space is less of an issue in Bangladesh than many European cultures. Bengalis stand close when speaking to someone of the same gender and touch is common.
- However, when speaking with a woman the space is often increased.

## Meetings

- Meetings are generally the place where decisions are disseminated rather than made.
- They will usually be led by the most senior present.
- Communication is formal and follows a hierarchical structure. Deference to the most senior person in the group is expected.
- Casual behaviour may be misinterpreted as a lack of respect.
- The need to avoid a loss of face is also reflected in communication styles. Rather than say no or disappoint people Bangladeshis will phrase sentiments in such a way that it is up to people to read between the lines to understand what is being implied. Phrases such as "we will try", "that may be difficult", or "we will have to give that some thought" may really mean "this can't be done".
- Therefore, it is important to ask questions in several ways so you can be certain what was meant by a vague response. Silence is often used as a communication tool.
- Many people comment on the lack of smiles in Bangladesh. This has nothing to do with unfriendliness but rather related to the fact that a serious face is believed to demonstrate maturity.

## Sikh Culture

Sikhism is a distinct religion, having no links with Hinduism or Islam. Punjabi is the language of the Sikhs. Sikhism is a way of life that advocates the practice of holistic life experiences—work, worship, and service. Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world. It does not recognize racial, class or caste discrimination.

Information on Turbans:

- 99.9% of people with turbans are Sikhs
- Turbans symbolize discipline, integrity, humility, and spirituality
- Turbans are a religious requirement - must be worn at all times in public
- A turban is not a hat. It cannot be casually taken on and off. It must be carefully retied each time it is removed
- Turbans are a mandatory part of Sikh faith, not a social custom
- Sikhs feel humiliated if asked to remove their turban in public, as doing so exposes an intimate part of their body

Sikhs believe in:

- Freedom of speech, religion
- Justice and liberty for all
- Defending civil liberties and protecting the defenseless
- Tolerance and absolute equality of all people without regard to gender, race, caste, or religion
- One God common to all
- Equal rights for women

It is normal for Sikhs to have arranged marriages where the parents choose partners for their children based on mutual interests, similarities in life style and culture. Divorce is against their teachings. An ideal woman plays the role of a good daughter or sister, a good wife and good mother within the context of family life however are seen as equal in the context of business and politics. Condemned are both women and men who do not observe the cultural norms of modesty and honor in their lives. There is no tolerance for any kind of premarital or extramarital sexual relationships.

A Sikh son traditionally lives and raises a family in the home of his parents after marriage. A Sikh father takes an active role in family life and in the upbringing of children. Grandparents take active roles in caring for grandchildren. All female children receive the name of Kaur and all male children the name of Singh either as a surname or connector. Sikhs do not eat beef.

Sikhs who are baptized vow to wear the Five "K's":

**Keshh** - uncut hair and beard, as given by God, to sustain him or her in higher consciousness; and a turban, the crown of spirituality.

**Kangha** - a wooden comb to properly groom the hair as a symbol of cleanliness.

**Katchera** - specially made cotton underwear as a reminder of the commitment to purity.

**Kara** - a steel circle, worn on the wrist signifying bondage to Truth and freedom from every other entanglement.

**Kirpan** - the sword, with which the Khalsa is committed to righteously defend the fine line of the Truth.

Boys will begin wearing turbans usually when they enter adulthood and until then cover their heads with patkas a wrapped piece of cloth with a ball on top. Girls may wear a rishi knot or chuni.

## **WEST INDIAN COMMUNITIES**

### **JAMAICAN CULTURE**

#### **The Language**

English is the official language. However, in Jamaica, Patois (Creole), a combination of English and some African languages is often used. It is not a written language.

#### **Family**

- The Jamaican family includes a close-knit web of aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. In the Caribbean the community plays a large role in child rearing. Families are close and provide both emotional and economic support to its members. Even non-biological 'family' members are referred to as "Auntie" as a sign of respect. The family is the most important group a person belongs to, and as such, it is the group with whom a person spends most of his/her time developing and maintaining cordial relations.
- The father's principal role is as the provider for the family and leaves the child-care to the mother. They are involved in the disciplining of the children, especially the boys and seen as distant from their daughters. This should not be construed as uncaring; they feel that they are not equipped.
- Children are required to be obedient, respectful and submissive to their parents.
- The formation of family begins not in marriage but at birth. Single women head many families.
- Physical discipline is frequently used and is balanced in a context of strong support and affection.
- The majority of families in the Caribbean are from an African background. The family is often led by women and will often include many generations in one home. There are many generations of people of Asian descent.

#### **Religion**

- Religion is fundamental, which can be seen in the references to Biblical events in everyday speech. The islands have the highest number of churches per capita in the world and more than 100 different Christian denominations.

#### **Meeting and Greeting**

- The most common greeting is the handshake with direct eye contact, and a warm smile. Use the appropriate salutation for the time of day: "good morning", "good afternoon", or "good evening". Address people by their honorific title (Mr., Mrs., or Miss) and their surname until a personal relationship has developed. Always wait until invited before using someone's first name.
- While Jamaicans are outwardly warm and friendly, they often appear standoffish at the initial introduction because they are reserved until they get to know someone.

Do not appear overly familiar at the initial greeting.  
Socializing is an important part of developing a relationship.  
They can be direct communicators and are not afraid to say what they think.  
It is imperative to show deference and respect to those in positions of authority.  
Proximity during communication is to stand very close when conversing.

## **SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

The majority of the population describes themselves as African/ Black, with a lesser majority as mixed some as Amerindian , East Indian, and Caucasians some of Portuguese descent.

### **Marriage and Family**

Three forms of conjugal relationship are recognized: "visiting" (the couple reside separately), "keeping" (cohabitation), and legal marriage. Among the majority of the population, the tendency is to marry later in life, usually after a couple has had several children together. It is common for women and men to have a number of children by different partners. Households in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines may be composed of extended families, nuclear families, or individuals. The multigenerational family head by women is typical. Overall, the composition of the household is flexible. Children are "shifted" to the households of kin to lighten the subsistence needs of a household or for various others reasons such as the inability of a mother to care for the child due to illness and employment.

People recognize kin of any degree and will go out of their way to be especially courteous and generous to them, but there are no kin groupings larger than the extended family. Children are seen as desirable and highly valued in Caribbean society. Parental success is measured by children's ability to sit still and listen; to be clean and tidy, and by their helpfulness and cooperation. Many Caribbean parents adhere to the biblical teaching that physical discipline is preferred and feel that children should be seen and not heard. In general, parents use a punitive approach to discipline. As a result, qualities such as obedience and submission are valued, especially with girls. Parents are often extremely protective (possibly over-protective) of girls and restrict their activities outside the home. Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to become involved in activities outside of the home.

### **Socialization**

A child is not given a name until about four weeks after birth. Caregivers are more concerned about education than anything else. Woman is both worker and nurturer—central to the socialization of the children. Children are raised by everyone in the household and in the extended family. Children early on develop a sense of security about their place in society.

### **Etiquette**

Generosity is the main feature of Vincentian conduct. Vincentians give of themselves and their resources to an extraordinary degree. A custom that may strike one as unusual is that it is a serious breach of etiquette to call someone's name in public.

## **Religion**

Saint Vincent is a Christian country: Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, and Pentecostal. About 10 percent of the population belong to the local "Converted" religion (also known as "Spiritual Baptist"), a combination of African and Christian rituals. Several hundred Vincentians are Rastafarians. Among a large portion of the Vincentian population, dreams are interpreted as real spiritual events and many ordinary Vincentians fear dreams, as they may predict misfortune. "Jumbies" (evil spirits), "Rounces" (spirit-animals that produce night terrors), "Ghosts" (the spirits of lie people seeking their graves), "Diablasses" (demon temptresses), "Haggs" (vampire-like creatures), and other supernatural beings are believed to inhabit Saint Vincent and many small ritual actions are required to protect one from them. These include keeping a bottle of hot pepper sauce by one's bed, placing a jar of urine in one's yard, and spinning around before entering one's home. Some young people scoff at these practices.

Resource Guide for Montreal's Black Community (BCRC)  
[www.bcrcmontreal.com](http://www.bcrcmontreal.com)

## **WEST AFRICAN COMMUNITIES**

### **GHANAIAN CULTURE**

The official language of Ghana is English. Fourteen languages other than English have the status of government-sponsored languages. For the most part, Ghanaians are multilingual and speak at least 3 languages or more.

#### **The Family**

- Family is a very strong bond in Ghana and is the primary source of identity, loyalty and responsibility. Family obligations take precedence over pretty much everything else in life. Individuals achieve recognition and social standing through their extended family.
- An interesting cultural variation among the Akan, or Ashanti and Fanti people, is that affiliation within the clan is through women. It is a matrilineal society with people getting their bloodlines from their mothers.
- It is important for Ghanaians to maintain dignity, honour, and a good reputation. The entire family shares any loss of honour perpetrated by even one member.
- In order to protect this sense of face there is a need to maintain a sense of harmony; people will act with decorum at all times to ensure they do not cause anyone embarrassment.

#### **Hierarchy**

Ghanaian society is hierarchical. People are respected because of their age, experience, wealth and/or position. Older people are viewed as wise and are granted respect. In a group one can always see preferential treatment for the eldest member. With respect comes responsibility and people expect the most senior person to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.

#### **Meeting and Greeting**

- Handshakes are the most common means of greeting.
- It's generally common to wait for a woman to extend her hand first.
- Take time to enquire about people's health, family and jobs. To rush a greeting is extremely rude.
- Maintain eye contact during the greeting.
- Wait until invited before moving to a first-name basis. The younger generation will tend to do so rapidly.
- Present and receive business cards with two hands or the right hand, never with the left.
- When shaking hands between themselves Ghanaians will hold the right hand in the normal manner but will then twist and click each other's middle finger.
- Address individuals by their academic, professional, or honorific title and their surname.

#### **Communication Style**

Ghanaians are more indirect communicators. This means they take care not to relay information in any way that could cause issues, whether that be giving someone bad news, turning down an invitation, refusing a request or any other such matter. Ghanaians always want to protect their own and others' face as well as maintain harmonious relationships.

As a result they tend to use proverbs, wise sayings, analogies readily. This allows ideas or messages to be conveyed in a manner that does not seem so blatant. In fact people who are viewed as wise frequently speak in proverbs.

Silence is a common means of communication. If someone is uncomfortable with a question or does not think the asker will appreciate the response, they will say nothing rather than make the other person uncomfortable.

### **Body Gestures**

- **DON'T** use your left hand to give or receive items, or wave at a person.
- **DON'T** sit with your legs crossed among elders.
- **DO** expect to see members of the same sex holding hands. It's a sign of friendship. Members of the opposite sex usually don't hold hands.
- **USING** your right hand to shake, touch, or anything else is a must. The left hand for these things is considered rude and dirty.
- **Pointing** at people is considered rude. Instead, people purse their lips in the direction of the person to which they are referring.
- The thumb's up sign is a rude gesture.

### **NIGERIAN CULTURE**

The languages currently estimated and catalogued in Nigeria is 521. This number includes commonly used and extinct languages. The official language of Nigeria is English. The major native languages spoken in Nigeria represent three major families of African languages - the majority are Niger-Congo languages, such as Yoruba, Ibo, the Hausa language is Afro-Asiatic; and Kanuri, spoken in the northeast, primarily Borno State, is a member of the Nilo-Saharan family. Even though most ethnic groups prefer to communicate in their own languages, English, being the official language, is widely used.

### **Religion**

Many religions are followed in Nigeria. The constitution guarantees religious freedom. Christians predominantly live in the south of the country, whereas Muslims live predominantly in the north.

### **National Pride**

Nigeria is considered a super-power in the African continent and consequently Nigerians are generally proud of their country. They are fond of the expression, "When Nigeria sneezes, the rest of the African nations (with the exception of South Africa) catch cold."

### **The Family**

Extended families are still the norm and are in fact the backbone of the social system. Grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers and in-laws all work as a unit through life.

Family relationships are guided by hierarchy and seniority. Social standing and recognition is achieved through extended families. Similarly a family's honour is influenced by the actions of its members. Individuals turn to members of the extended family for financial aid and guidance, and the family is expected to provide for the welfare of every member. Although the role of the extended

family is diminishing somewhat in urban areas, there remains a strong tradition of mutual caring and responsibility among the members.

## **Hierarchy**

Nigeria is a hierarchical society. Age and position demand respect. Age is believed to confer wisdom so older people are granted respect. The oldest person in a group is revered and honoured. In a social situation, they are greeted and served first. In return the most senior person has the responsibility to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.

## **Meeting and Greeting**

- The most common greeting is a handshake.
- Men may place their left hand on the other person's shoulder while shaking hands. Smiling and showing sincere pleasure at meeting the person is important.
- You must take the time to ask about the person's health, the health of their family, or other social niceties.
- A Nigerian generally waits for the woman to extend her hand.
- Observant Muslims will not shake hands with members of the opposite sex.
- Always wait until invited before using someone's first name.
- **DO** present business cards with two hands or the right hand, **never** with the left.
- **DO** be careful about eye contact. Constant and direct eye contact can be seen as being intrusive.

## **Communication Style**

You may find their tone slightly louder than elsewhere. They may raise their voices and become emotionally excited when they feel passionately about a topic.

Nigerians prefer facial expressions that imply empathy and believe an indifferent facial expression indicates that a person is ignorant or obnoxious.

Nigerian communication can also be indirect and may rely on non-verbal cues. Many use gestures when communicating.

They may smile to mask their true feelings, especially when disappointed or confused. Many employ indirect eye contact to demonstrate their respect for the other person. It is common to gaze at the forehead or shoulders of someone they do not know well. Very direct eye contact may be interpreted as being intrusive unless there is a longstanding personal relationship.

## **ETHIOPIAN CULTURE**

### **Language**

Ethiopia has many indigenous languages: most of them are Afro-Asiatic (Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic), plus some that are Nilo-Saharan.

English is the most widely spoken foreign language and is the medium of instruction in secondary schools and universities. Amharic was the language of primary school instruction, but has been replaced in many areas by local languages such as Oromifa and Tigrinya.

**The People** Ethiopia is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country. Religion is a major influence in Ethiopian life. Nearly half the population belongs to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church but there is also a large Muslim population. Others adhere to a form of Judaism.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is proud of its origins. The feast of the Epiphany ("Timkat") is the largest festival of the year falling approximately two weeks after Christmas. The Orthodox Church dominates the political, cultural, and social life of the population.

### **The Family**

The extended family remains the focus of the social system. It includes relatives on both sides of the family as well as close friends. Quite often the husband's parents will live with the nuclear family when they get older. When people marry, they join their families, thus ensuring that there will always be a group to turn to in times of need.

Individuals achieve recognition or social standing through their extended family. A family's honor is influenced by the actions of its members. Family needs are put before all other obligations.

### **Meeting Etiquette**

- Ethiopian greetings are courteous and somewhat formal.
- The most common form of greeting is a handshake with direct eye contact.
- The handshake is generally much lighter than in Western cultures.
- Across genders, men should wait to see if a woman extends her hand.
- Greetings should never be rushed. Take time to inquire about the person's family, health, job, etc.
- People are addressed with their honorific title and their first name.
- Elders should be greeted first.
- It is customary to bow when introduced to someone who is obviously older or has a more senior position. Children will often be seen doing so.
- Shake hands with each guest individually.

### **Communication Style**

Ethiopians can be very sensitive when it comes to communication. As a general rule, they are humble and respect others. They generally speak in soft tones. Loud voices are seen as too aggressive. Ethiopians pride themselves on their eloquent speaking style and expect others to speak clearly and use metaphor, allusion, and witty innuendoes. They often use exaggerated phrases to emphasize a point.

As a rule, Ethiopians tend to be non-confrontational and offer what they believe is the expected response rather than say something that might embarrass another. Honour and dignity are crucial to Ethiopians and they will go out of their way to keep from doing something that could bring shame to another person. Therefore, it is important to never do anything that would make them lose dignity and respect.

## **OTHERS**

### **Armenian Community Service**

Advice, referrals, information, interpretation/translation, social support services

514-337-3969

### **Bolivian Association of Montréal**

Information, referrals, support, emergency food, transportation and housing

514-521-0487

### **Hungarian Catholic Community of Montréal**

Interpretation and translation, emergency food, support, advocacy

514-387-9503

### **Turkish Muslim Association of Québec**

514-634-9036

### **Association of Chileans of Quebec**

3730 Avenue du Parc,

Montréal, Québec,

H2X 2J1

514- 509-4432

[info@chilenos.qc.ca](mailto:info@chilenos.qc.ca)

[www.chilenos.qc.ca](http://www.chilenos.qc.ca)

## **GENERAL**

### **La Maison Bleue**

3735 Plamondon  
Montréal, Qué  
H3S 1L8  
514-509-0833

Serving the population of CDN – more  
Specifically pregnant or underprivileged  
(socio-economic problems, domestic violence,  
recent immigrants, refugees...) families and will  
follow children until age 5. Provide pre/post natal  
care, paediatric medical care, early stimulation  
groups, parent/child activities, psycho-social and  
ethnopsychiatric services.

### **Information and Referral Centre of Montréal**

514-527-1375  
[crgm@info-reference.qc.ca](mailto:crgm@info-reference.qc.ca)

### **Project Genesis**

4735 Cote Ste. Catherine  
Montréal  
H3W 1M1  
514-738-2036  
Closed Wednesdays

### **Montreal Women's Centre**

3585 St. Urbain  
Montréal  
H2X 2N6  
514-842-0814

Legal counsel and intervention, French  
courses, spousal, violence prevention  
program, employability enhancement,  
emergency food and clothing.

Languages spoken: Armenian, Arabic,  
Creole, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Russian,  
Vietnamese, English and French

### **C.A.R.I. St. Laurent**

1179 boul. Décarie #10  
Saint-Laurent, H4L 3M8,  
Tél: (514) 748 2007  
[carist@cari.qc.ca](mailto:carist@cari.qc.ca)

Help/Support/Advocacy for all  
immigrants to Montreal

### **Centre Sociale D'Aide aux Immigrants**

514-932-2953

### **West Island Info and Referral Centre**

514-694-6404

### **Femmes Du Monde**

6767 Cote Des Neiges #597  
Montréal  
H3S 2T6  
514-735-9027

### **COPSI (Centre D'Orientation Para-legale et Sociale pour Immigrants)**

514-843-6869  
514-845-2361

### **Multicultural Liaison and Assistance Forum**

7290 Hutchison  
Montréal  
H3N 1Z1  
514-271-8207

Social support services, interpretation  
and translation, free French, English and  
computer courses, information, referrals

Languages spoken Arabic, Bengali,  
Spanish, Russian

**Notre-Dame de Grace Multi-Ethnic  
Centre (Center)**

6525 Somerled # 3  
Montréal  
H4V 1S7  
514-486-7465

Information and referrals, emergency food  
supplies, housing assistance, job search  
and employability techniques

Languages spoken German, Arabic,  
Spanish, Italian and Greek

**Alliance of Cultural Communities for  
Equality in the Health and Social Services  
(ACCESS MTL)**

82 boul St. Joseph O  
Montréal  
H2T 2P4  
514-287-1106

Information and referrals for accessibility to  
ethno-cultural communities/services

**International Social Services Canada**

P.O. Box 5027  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K2C 3H3  
613-821-9938 Fax: 613-821-2932  
Casework Supervisor: Sylvie Lapointe  
[www.issc-ssic.ca](http://www.issc-ssic.ca)

**Maison Multi-Ethnique Myosotis**

660 rue Villeray  
Bureau 2.107  
Montréal, Québec  
H2R 1J1  
514-271-4407 Fax : 514-271-2620

Counselling and support for people of all ages and different cultures

## **Information Websites**

### **1. <http://multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z>**

It will open to the Home Page. On the right you will see Resources. Open Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples. Then open the Group Entries A-Z. The writing in the list is VERY small. (I haven't figured out how to make it larger)

For each group there are about 12 sub-categories of information that may be helpful to anyone who might want to quickly learn about a specific people with whom they are working i.e. customs, languages, religious beliefs, community etc...

### **2. Kwintessential**

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk>

Cross Cultural Communication specifically: Customs and Etiquette for countries around the world.