

## Managing a Multicultural Workforce

Given the diverse nature of the workforce in Alberta, it is very important for business owners, supervisors and employees to develop a cultural awareness. Within a multicultural team, a person's cultural background will impact how they act and behave. There will be differences in areas such as communication, attitude towards conflict, approaches to task completion and decision making styles. Unless owners, supervisors and fellow team members come to realize these differences between them through cultural awareness, potential problems could arise.

### Things to Consider:

- **Build your cultural knowledge:** Try to learn a bit more about other cultures and countries. Information is easily found on the internet and in books. You can also ask other local employers.
- **Treat people as individuals:** Information about other cultures is sometimes based on generalizations. This means that the information will not apply to every single member of that culture. Be aware of this and try to deal with people as individuals.
- **Ask an expert:** Invite a spokesperson representing a specific cultural community to talk to your team about their culture.
- **Implement your cultural knowledge:** If you have discovered some useful information about a culture that is represented in your multicultural team, put it to the test. It is only by putting these things into action that you will come to see the benefits and gain additional insights from the experience.
- **Withhold assumptions:** Avoid jumping to conclusions about people. One of the first rules of cultural awareness is refraining from assuming one way is wrong and one is right.
- **Listen actively:** Active listening is another cornerstone of cultural awareness. Rather than just "listening" to people you should really pay attention to the words used, the way it is said, the context, and also read between the lines. Don't forget the importance of body language and facial expressions as part of how people communicate.
- **Share your knowledge:** Work with your team to share knowledge with one another. Help build up the skill set and level of comfort of the team.
- **Respect:** The key in dealing with all humans is to respect them!