

## **SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

Many Canadians have experienced the excitement, tension and fears of a move from one part of the country to another or from a rural to an urban environment. In the last few decades, many aboriginal people have moved from rural to urban environments. The majority of visible minorities in Canada are comparatively recent immigrants and many are experiencing the stresses and strains, not only of moving from one country to another, but also from a rural background to an urban center. All immigrants share common settlement experiences. In the case of most, there is little or no advance preparation for the inevitable challenges to traditional values and life-styles. Adaptation is a long, ongoing process and is especially difficult for people who are members of visible minority groups.

Although there is much overlap, the Committee found it useful in its deliberations to make a distinction between settlement, integration and participation. The settlement phase was seen as an initial stage of contact immediately after arrival. The prime concerns at that time are satisfying basic needs: shelter, a sense of community support from one's own family or ethnic group, minimum facility with French or English, minimum acquaintance with "Canadian ways", and work, frequently any kind of work. Integration means increased interaction with many other cultural groups and institutions in Canadian society. It means participation, while retaining as much cultural heritage as desired without being denied equality of opportunity. It is at this stage that efforts should be made to acquaint Canadian institutions with the cultures of the minorities. Social integration demands a process of mutual adjustment and mutual resolution of problems and issues.

Full participation for visible minorities will be achieved when they are represented in the full spectrum of economic, political, social and cultural life of this country. There will be full equality for all individuals and mechanisms to ensure protection from all forms of discrimination. Visible minorities will have an opportunity to acquire one of Canada's two official languages. There will be equal access to services. They will be employed in jobs consistent with their qualifications and have developed the skills and received the encouragement to participate in the decision-making processes of society. The cultures of visible minorities will be shared in an atmosphere of positive mutual regard and emulation. Many members of visible minority communities want to move as quickly as possible to full integration and participation. It is in the best interest of Canadian society to fulfil those wishes. It is a waste of human resources to do otherwise.