



The 5th Metropolis Identities Summit

**Diversity, Equity
and Inclusion:
Practices, Policies
and Programs**

Canadian Policies: Citizenship

Forward Looking Inclusion Policies Can Strengthen
The Merit Of Responsible Citizenship



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Agenda

- Citizenship as identity and legal status
- Requirements for acquiring citizenship
- Changes in rules over time
- Current approaches to citizenship
- Hierarchy in citizenry
- Intentional pathways to citizenship
- Inclusion leads to active and responsible citizens



Citizenship as Identity and Legal Status

- How we as people identify our connection to a particular country:
 - Birth
 - Adoption
 - Descent
 - Naturalization - Born somewhere else; Meet the requirements of another country; Become eligible for citizenship in that country
- Each country sets its own rules, policies and procedures



Requirements for acquiring Citizenship

- Apply for permanent residency
- Physical presence in the country (1095 days or 3 years out of a 5 year period)
- File and pay taxes for 3 years out of a 5 year period
- Pass a formal language test if you are between the ages of 18 and 54
- Pass a knowledge test to know about the country as well as your rights and responsibilities
- Pay a fee to apply for citizenship (\$630 for adults and \$100 for minors; Family of 4 – a couple with 2 minor children needs to come up with \$1460)



Changes in Rules over time - Age

- Age limits for testing have been placed
- Obstacles created for older people
- Before applicants under 65 were required take the knowledge test
- Now applicants under 55 are required to take the knowledge test
- More people above 55 have become eligible to apply for citizenship (without having to take the test)



Changes in Rules over time - Income

- Expensive processing fees
- Barriers that already exist
- Rise in fees as service costs
- Low Income Families excluded
- Likelihood of success
- Mitigation of risks associated



Changes in Rules over time - Origin

- Formal English language testing criteria
- Exclusion of those whose primary language is not English
- Did we have formal language testing in the past?
- Why was that not a barrier for applicants in the past?
- Why are we creating these obstacles for applicants that originate from certain countries?



Hierarchy in Citizenry

- What are the real reasons for barriers to citizenship?
- Tensions run high in a tiered citizenry due to differences in status
- How can we talk about inclusion while being divisive in action?
- The very systems that are supposed to offer citizens equal rights and privileges are the ones embedded with systemic discrimination
- Practices that create a pyramid or a pecking order



Intentional Pathways to Citizenship

- Examine our current approaches to citizenship
- Assess the criteria and rules for citizenship
- Who is making the rules and who is impacted by these rules?
- Focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups - Refugees
- Blanket rules and one size fits all does not lead to equal access
- What can be used in lieu of language test scores?
- How can we be more just and inclusive?



Inclusion leads to active and responsible citizens

- Inclusion creates a sense of belonging.
- A sense of belonging means that you fit in.
- Fitting in leads to security in one's identity.
- One's own security enables one to reach out to others.
- It creates a sense of responsibility and accountability for one another.
- This leads to overall progress!



Thank You!

