

## DECEMBER DATES TO REMEMBER

- 5 - [Hanukkah](#)\* (Jewish)
- 6 - St. Nicholas Day (International)
- 8 - Bodhi Day - Buddha's Enlightenment (Buddhist)
- 16-25 - [Las Posadas](#) (Mexico) [Novenas](#) – Colombia
- 18 – International migrant's day
- 19 – [Haji](#) – (Islam)
- 20 - [Eid al-adha](#) (Islamic, Muslim)
- 25 - [Christmas](#) (Christian, Roman Catholic, International)
- 31 - [New Year's Eve](#) (United States, International)

### *December is the Universal Human Rights Month*



## APPRECIATING DIVERSITY DURING THE HOLIDAYS by: [Simma Lieberman](#)

Diversity's About More than Just a simple "Happy Holidays" Greeting Cardx

It used to be that being inclusive meant sending out politically correct "Happy Holidays" greeting cards and changing Christmas office parties to "holiday parties." Today, celebrating inclusiveness and diversity is about more than just changing labels and titles.

### **A Note for Employers about Religious or Holiday Celebrations: a few extra things employers can do to make their workplaces more inclusive during the holidays**

Make sure your holiday party isn't a Christmas party in disguise. Decorations and food should be general, and not specific to any religion.

Consider having a New Year's party instead of a holiday party. This type of party can get everyone on board with the company's mission and vision for the New Year.

Post holiday greetings on your webpage and Intranet for many religious holidays.

Be respectful of these special dates, and plan events and meetings around various holidays.

Display a multi-cultural calendar to help all employees stay aware of important cultural events for the rest of the year.

Be flexible with the needs of different employees about religious or holiday celebrations.

Encourage employees to share their celebrations through stories, decorations, and foods that they can bring to their workplace.





## THE SECOND ANNUAL ABILITY FIRST CONFERENCE

### WAS HELD AT THE LONDON CONVENTION CENTRE ON NOVEMBER 6.

If you weren't able to attend the second annual Ability First conference "Taking the Next Step to Employ the Best for your Business", you missed an outstanding program. Make a note to book early in 2008!

**Michael Harcourt**, former Premier of British Columbia and spinal cord injury survivor, kicked off the morning. He has been credited with helping BC earn its reputation as one of the most liveable places in the world.

Participants then chose to engage in 2 out of 3 topical breakout sessions:

- **Accommodation:** a brief presentation by Jeanne McLaws, ATN and Robin Shannon, Canadian Hearing Society was followed by a hands on opportunity to explore the latest high and low technology and devices.
- **Interviewing Techniques for Persons with Disabilities:** Panelists Kash Husain (Chair, City of London Accessibility Advisory Committee), Katie Froussios (Recruitment Officer for Management and Specialized Recruitment, TD Canada Trust) and Vicky Smith (President, HRPLD) presented practical techniques to provide appropriate accommodations during the interview process.
- **Government Assistance:** Panelists Elizabeth White (City of London), Karen Henze-Whittle (Service Canada) and Carla Scherele Thompson (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities) showcased what training and support incentives are available from the government for hiring a personal with disabilities.

Over lunch, **John Davidson**, whose son Jesse has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, highlighted pushing his son in a wheelchair across Ontario. This dynamic duo has raised more than \$5.5 M for research into genetic illnesses.

To wrap up, **Luca "Lazy Legz" Patuelli**, who was born with Arthrogryposis that limits motion in the joints, demonstrated the moves that have earned him the reputation of breakdancer extraordinaire.

The most overheard comment: these accommodations could be right for any one of us as "differently abled" people, not just persons with "disabilities"!

Thanks again to sponsors TD Financial Group, 3M, the London Chamber of Commerce, London Life and A Channel for not only building the business case for diversity but showcasing such compelling success stories. It does open up a world of possibilities to take advantage of one of the most untapped sources of outstanding employment opportunities while laying out the regulatory groundwork where we can all learn first hand how best to accommodate people with amazing abilities.



## **RECOGNIZE, EMPATHIZE AND MAXIMIZE: THE INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITY**

*An Interview with Kim Rowe, International Student Advisor, Fanshawe College*

By Jen Denys, B.A., CHRP, CPC

It should be no surprise to learn that 3.7 million people will retire within the next five years and that number will more than double in ten years. As the Canadian population cannot fill the void that these individuals will leave in the workforce, it is predicted that by 2011, 100% of labour market growth will come from people who immigrate to our country. Research also shows that the majority of organizations have expended little time and effort in the areas of succession planning, talent attraction and development of personnel to attack this issue. According to "HR Transformation v 2.0: It's all about the business" published this year by Mercer Human Resources Consulting, acquiring key talent/the lack of available talent, building leadership capability and driving cultural and behaviour change in the organization are the top priorities of North American HR departments. However, this same report notes that many HR practices have not been re-engineered to reflect current realities.

During a recent interview I asked Kim Rowe to offer her thoughts on how immigrants are equipped to fill Canada's need for skilled labour and her perceptions on how Fanshawe College's International and English as a Second Language (ESL) students fit into this equation. As the International Student Advisor, Kim spends 90% of her time as a front-line student success support and advocate for the growing number of post-secondary International and ESL students. Her duties range from planning events to helping students socialize as a group, to helping with immigration documents, providing housing support and offering counsel and relational advice on a long list of issues that have to do with living independently in a new country. From being homesick to dealing with a fatal illness to providing academic guidance, Kim is responsible for everything to do with the student's Canadian experience. In addition, Kim supports Fanshawe College's student exchange programs and travels to the Caribbean countries to recruit new students.

According to Kim, there are a growing number of her students who want to gain Canadian work experience, either for a short time post-graduation before returning to their home country or as part of their desire for permanent residence. Kim recognizes that as the International and ESL populations have continued to rise over the past 3-5 years, there has been some increased awareness and support of this trend. However, much remains to be done at the individual, college and community levels if we truly want to capitalize on the opportunities that lay before us. As individuals, Kim suggests that we connect with our tendencies to be open-minded, patient and empathetic. The greatest myth that Kim has observed is the assumption that people are being rude or are not trying when it comes to communicating in English. Kim remarks that this is often not true and her students generally don't speak because no one has spoken to them or because they are shy and fear how others will react to their broken English. When a person is trying to put the words together, be patient, allow them the time they need. This is an easy way for us to increase their confidence, help them be better prepared and encourage them to practice their English at another opportunity.

At the college level, Kim would like to see growth within the International and ESL program. Today's leaders must embrace the realities of the changing demographics and look only at the mutual opportunities to be gained. While Kim would like to see faculty engage the second language learners – recognizing the vast knowledge and experience they can offer to a class – she notes that instructors require training on how to best meet the needs of this particular student group. While International recruitment would still be a primary focus, Kim would like to see more Ontario-based Fanshawe College students

traveling to other countries to gain work skills and cultural experience in the form of internships, co-op placements and student exchanges.

At the community level, Kim has received support from the local economic development corporations and non-profit sector. London Economic Development Corporation's "Global Talent" project and other initiatives have attempted to bring awareness to the subject and many community organizations offer volunteer opportunities and have acted as guest speakers at numerous functions. Where this trend faces a gap is when it comes to private companies. Kim suggests that organizations need to recognize that the demographic shifts are here for the long-term. There may be growing pains when it comes to recruiting and managing International talent, but once embraced it will offer much more in return.

Kim and I share many of the same thoughts about the potential pool of talent that exists internationally. Personally, I approach conversations with Fanshawe College's International and ESL students with honesty, naivety and eagerness. Having grown up in rural southwestern Ontario, I have not been exposed to a great deal of diversity in my life. I look to the students of Fanshawe College to teach me about their worlds, to tell me about the experience of living in a new country and to help me look past our differences to find what we have in common. I enjoy offering support to them as I believe it takes great courage to move across an ocean and build a life.

And now it is with a friendly tone and open heart I ask you to examine your own personal and professional practices when it comes to people who are not born in Canada (and anyone who is somehow different – culturally, ethnically, ability, orientation, family status, etc.). Ultimately, I think we have to **recognize** that our own Canadian culture has never been more diverse and that the demand for labour and our need to capitalize on the International supply is not a trend that will go away, but a competitive necessity. Second, I believe we should **empathize** with the life stories behind the people that come to Canada and help these individuals gain confidence in their language skills and support their cultural integration. Let us do our part to break down the barriers that exist for those who are different. Finally if we recognize and empathize, that puts us on the path to the final step – **maximize**. Every person shares the desire to contribute and connect with the community they live in. With very little effort, we can engage these individuals which will lead to more creative, global organizations; stronger, more inclusive communities and a thriving, competitive economy.

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We optimize the personal, professional, and organizational growth of our clients. Our areas of expertise include: HR Consulting, Career Management, Mentoring, Retirement Lifestyle Planning, Executive Coaching and Mediation.  
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