

Creating a welcoming cross-cultural environment: Top 10 things you can do

Source: OPSEU course, *Cross-Cultural Communication at Work: A Union Perspective*

1. If offering food at your meetings, always include a vegetarian option.
2. Clearly label the food so people can make informed choices about what they are eating.
3. If in doubt, do not assume. Ask questions in a respectful and open manner and know that most people welcome an environment where they can talk about their backgrounds.
4. Take the time to learn how to pronounce and spell your members' names accurately.
5. When people do not get involved, do not assume it is because they are not interested. Ask questions about what might interest them, or how they could see themselves getting more involved.
6. Avoid swearing and the use of aggressive language. People who are new to the Union or to their jobs may not be accustomed to this language and may feel intimidated about getting involved.
7. Be mindful when others are speaking. Allow them time to express their opinions and try to respectfully answer their questions.
8. Avoid cliques at your meetings. Build activities into your meetings that provide opportunities for everyone to get to know each other and ensure there are roles for everyone to get involved.
9. When planning a large gathering, send out a questionnaire in advance that canvasses your members' needs regarding accommodation.
10. Refrain from making negative comments or jokes about people's clothing, food, accent, way of speaking, etc. It is not intent but impact that matters.