



LEVELS OF WELCOME

Unwelcome/intolerant. “We don't want you or your ways in our community/church.” This is an attitude of *you don't belong here*. As Canadians many of us think we would never do that—but with increases in social tension or fear, or as economies fail, stress levels rise and outlooks can change.

Grudging tolerance. “It's a free country/ church, you can be here.” This is, in essence, saying “as long as you are acting in ways I/we consider acceptable [=like us], I/we will be reasonably nice to you.” But this is a passive [even reluctant] acceptance—and so “do not expect me to go out of my way to help you find a place.” and “you'd better pull your own weight here, no living off the state...”

Pleasant tolerance. “We will be nice & welcoming to you, if you 'behave' properly” This goes just a bit further is saying ‘I might not like the way you dress [‘fine for your country, but here dress Canadian’], pronounce your words [‘learn how to speak properly if you want people to understand you’], parent your kids [either too permissive, allowing the kids to run all over, or maybe too harsh, hitting them on the head, etc] - if you learn to behave properly I will tolerate your presence and even be in community with you” It allows for the possible slow growth of relationship, even friendship, but assumes there is a ‘Canadian way’ for newcomers or indigenous folk to follow.

Conditional welcome. “We'll welcome you into our lives/ community if you are trying to learn to be ‘Canadian.’” This goes a bit beyond passive acceptance, offering some [limited] assistance—helping you change to become more like us in order to assimilate. This assumes more of the melting pot vision than a vision of mosaic—assimilation = integration.

Unconditional welcome. “We welcome you, just as you are, to be a part of our community, just as we are.” This is sincere, significant welcome & does not require the other to change in order to be part of the group. It assumes a level of engagement from us in welcoming, an active approach. Some writers speak of this as ‘radical hospitality’. It assumes, however, that welcoming the other into the group will not substantially change the character, culture and ethos of the group itself.

Transformational welcome. “We welcome you—just as you are—into deep relationship with us, knowing that, in the process, we will change / be changed.” This goes a step further. It is saying we welcome your participation and presence deeply, knowing that by welcoming you into our community, we ourselves will be changed in the process. Implicitly it accords the other person/group the capacity change us. It assumes mutual adaptation [we will both be changed] and so does not assume one dominant culture/cohort.