



Resolving Identity Dilemmas and Conflicts in Schools: A Regional SWIS Perspective

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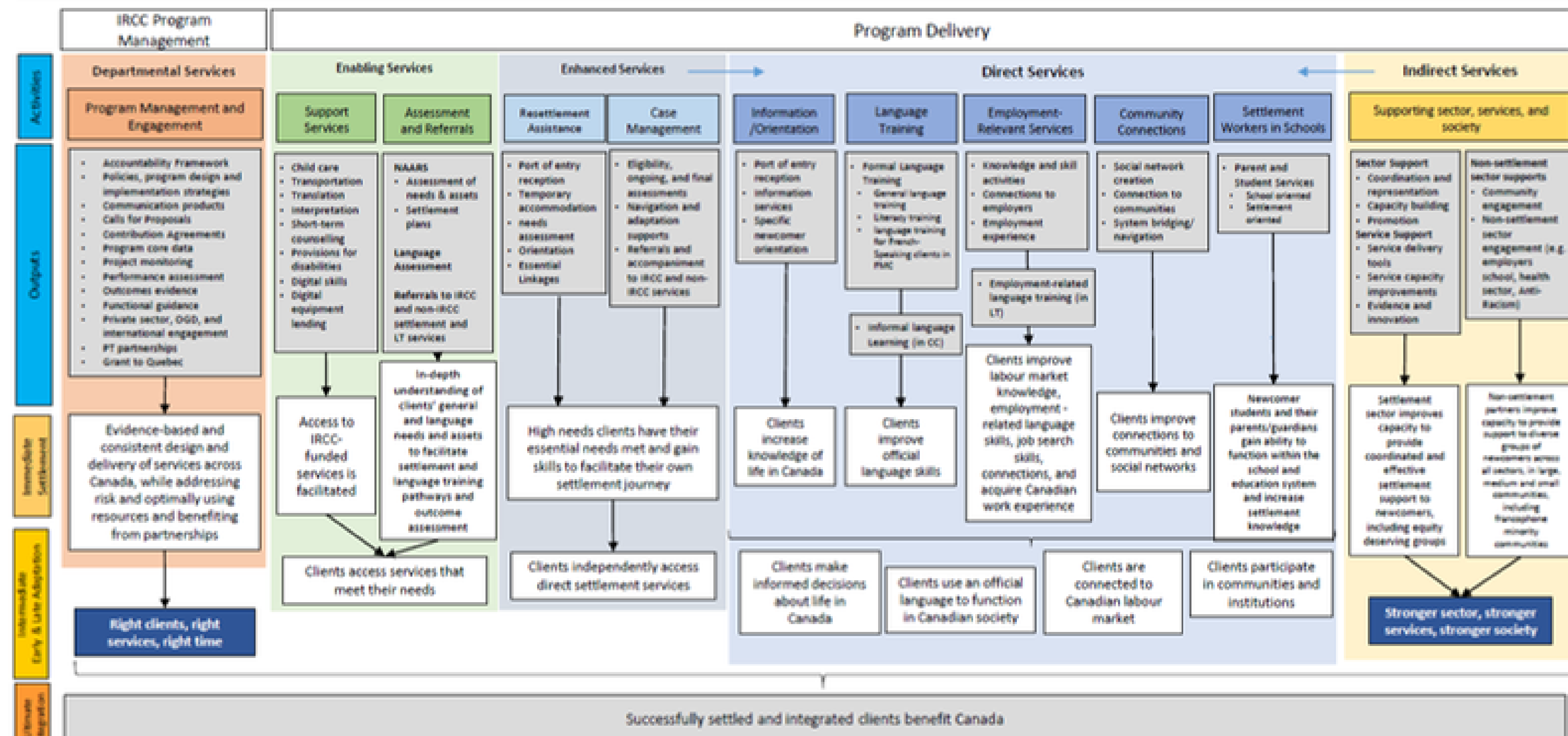


SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN SCHOOLS - SWIS

Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLO)

WHY

IRCC Settlement Program and Resettlement Assistance Program Logic Model – EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2025





ROLE OF SWIS-MLO

Direct Services for Students and Parents

Settlement Oriented services:

- Connecting parents and students with community and social networks to gain the ability to function in a new society
- Orientation to navigate Canadian systems

School-Oriented Services:

- Connecting students with learning supports, mental health services, peer support, teacher/parents interviews, and recreation
- Advocacy, understanding of the education system, sense of belonging in the classroom
- Conflict resolution, mediation, coaching, promoting healthy life styles



ROLE OF SWIS-MLO

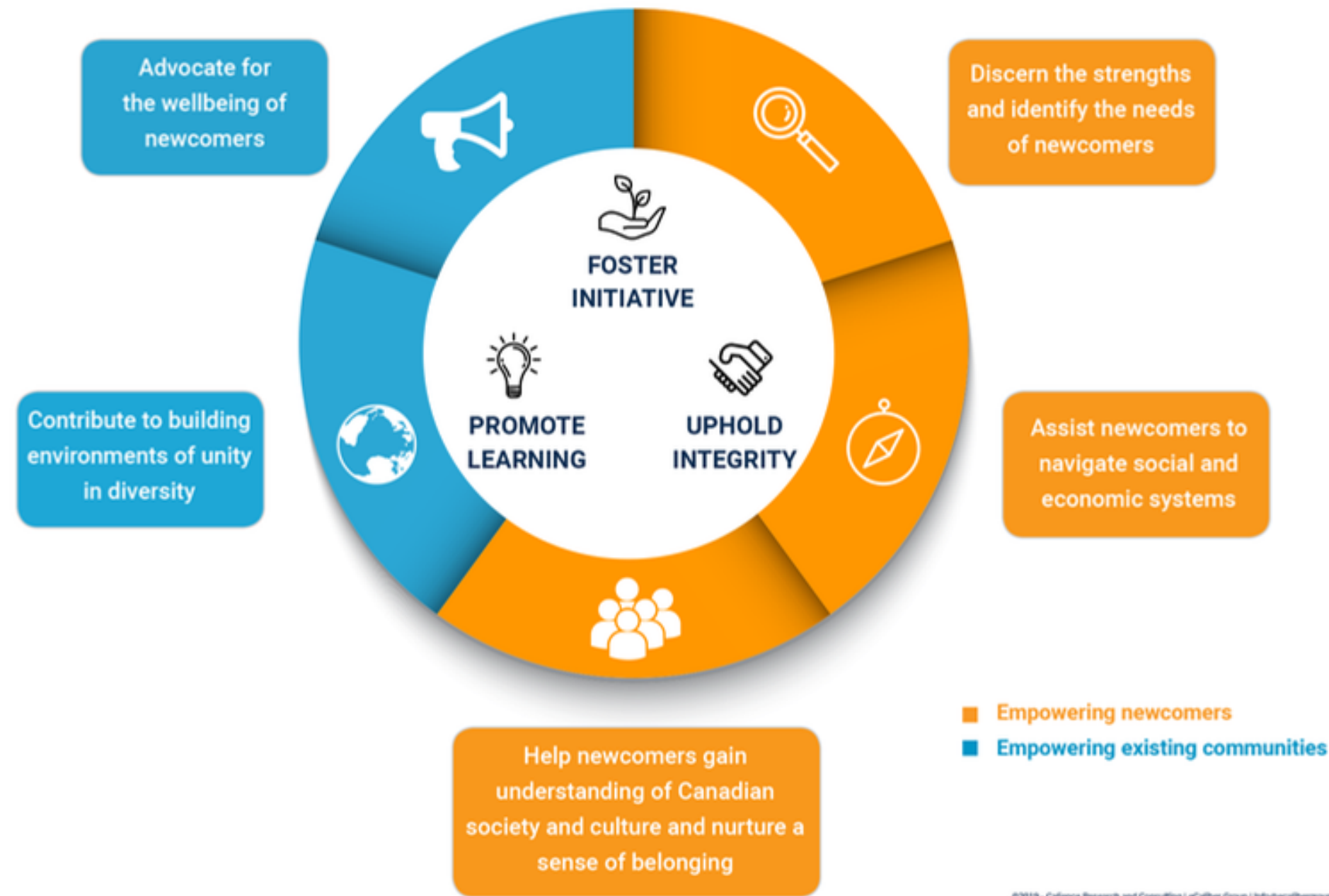
Direct Services for Students and Parents

- Cultural Interpretation
- Promoting inclusive environment through intercultural competence
- Conflict resolution with parents/students
- Assistance for parent's engagement with schools
- Connecting parents with other school professionals

BUILDING UNITY IN DIVERSITY

SWIS General and Particular Competencies

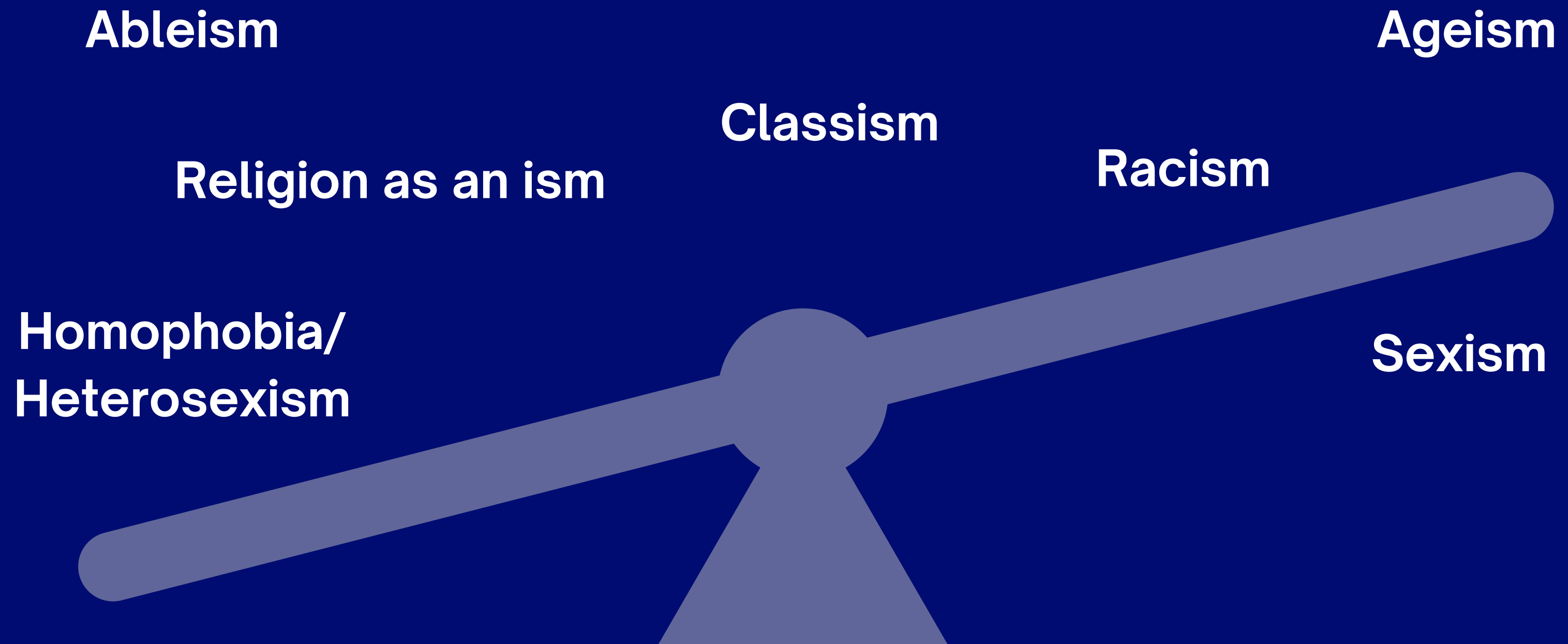
COMPETENCIES OF A SETTLEMENT COUNSELLOR



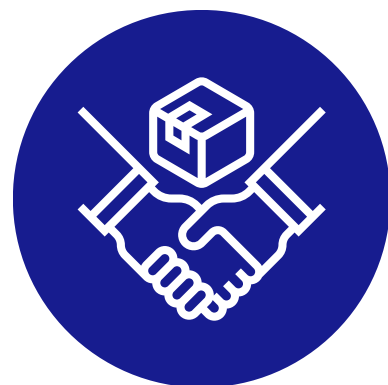
- Help newcomer students and parents navigate the education system
- Provide language and cultural interpretation to support both schools and newcomer families
- Create a welcoming environment through collaboration with schools and community partners
- Offer a safe space for youth to access programs, resources, and information

UNDERSTANDING POWER DYNAMICS IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

Schools are A Reflection of Society

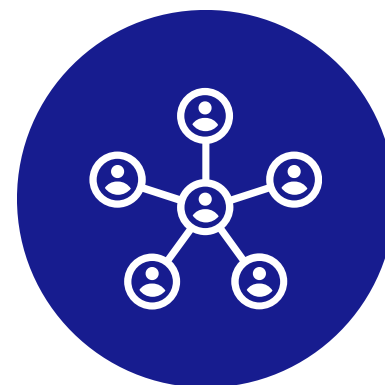


VALUES, BELIEFS, AND BIAS IN SCHOOLS



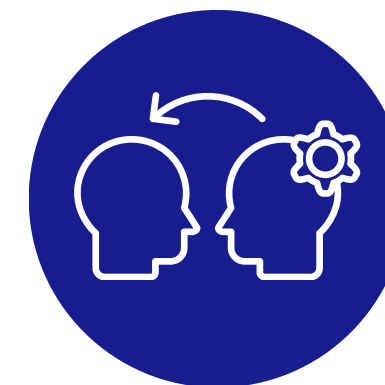
VALUES

Systems dictate how we judge what is considered “good” or “bad” in our community, culture, or society. They are unwritten rules that set the standards of behaviour in our daily life.



BELIEFS

Beliefs are the things that we believe to be true, regardless of the evidence.



BIAS

Biases are learned through social context within families, cultures, religions, spiritualities, secularism, ideologies and societal contexts.



SWIS JOURNEY TO INCLUSION



EQUALITY
SWIS first day



EQUITY
SWIS can see students
in the school library



INCLUSION
SWIS is considered
integral part of the school
community



SWIS ROLE IDENTITY DILEMMAS

- Language Interpreter
- Advocate
- Good Listener
- Parents Guidance
- School Policy Enforcer
- Bridging Cultural/Language Gaps
- Understanding Each Party's Concerns
- Mediator
- Equity Officer
- Social and School Support Navigator
- Youth/Social Worker
- Workshop Facilitator

SWIS UNDERSTANDING AND HANDLING POWER DYNAMICS IN SCHOOL SETTING

- SWIS are not exempt from issues of equality, equity and inclusion in schools
- Power and privilege are dynamic and constantly changing across society
- Building trust and relationships is an ongoing process, especially with school staff who rotate each year
- There are unspoken hierarchies: example: well-spoken teacher vs. newcomer parent, or school staff vs. newest SWIS worker
- SWIS awareness of: influence power vs. personal power vs. authority power



SWIS ROLE AND REALITIES FACED IN SCHOOLS

Evolution vs. Inclusion: Who Wins the Wall Space War?

Context:

The principal asks a SWIS to help answer a parent's concern:

Parents' concern:

During our visit for parent-teacher interviews, I noticed every classroom displayed LGBTQ flags, but none featured figures like Einstein or Da Vinci, or themes like Evolution. It's disappointing that the school seems to prioritize social trends over foundational education, especially during such formative years."





SWIS ROLE AND REALITIES FACED IN SCHOOLS

The SWIS Who Couldn't Resist a Good Conversation

Context:

School staff question the intervention of a SWIS

Feedback from the school staff:

I recently coordinated a parent–teacher meeting with a SWIS. While the meeting was productive, the SWIS occasionally engaged directly with the parents and shared personal views, rather than only translating for the teacher.

SENSITIVE TOPICS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIROMENT

- Parents are in opposition to the school staff
- Issues related to the Children's Aid Society
- Fights in schools
- Parents in need of an advocate in legal proceedings with schools
- Sanctions, exclusions, suspensions
- Gender identity topics
- Activities beyond SWIS role



SWIS SOURCES OF POWER, TRUST AND INFLUENCE



Expertise & Support

- School systems, student/parent support
- Community resources

Relationship Building

- Personal trust & loyalty
- Visibility at school events
- Outreach to key staff

Communication

- Clarify the SWIS role to the staff
- Use diplomacy & good judgment
- Strong communication skills

Professionalism

- Respect confidentiality
- Consistency & credibility
- Time management (service vs. admin, class vs. breaks)



Self Management

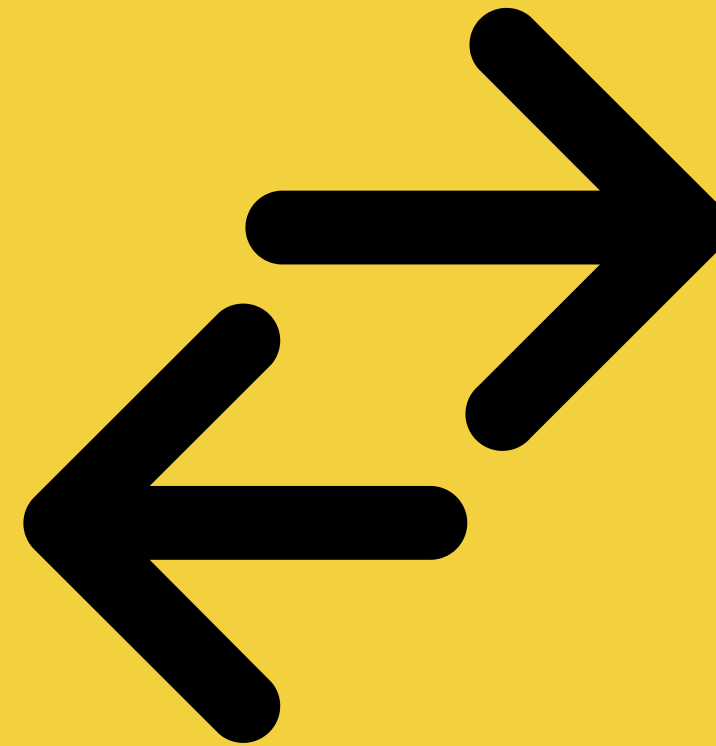
- Practice self-care
- Provide timely feedback

TRADITIONAL AND ANTI-OPPRESSION FRAMEWORK:

Best Practices / Professional Development

Anti-Oppression Framework

Instead of focusing on barriers, challenges, risks, vulnerabilities, and negative assumptions, service providers should highlight strengths, opportunities, and commonalities



Traditional Framework

Service provider guides the settlement process and focuses on overcoming difficulties

COMMUNICATION SKILLS: SWIS EXPERTISE

What information is helpful?

- Description
- Facts
- Feelings and perspectives
- Detecting clutter and distractors
- New thinking





HOW TO BE HELPFUL IN MEETINGS: **ASK QUESTIONS**



Questions to Find a Solution

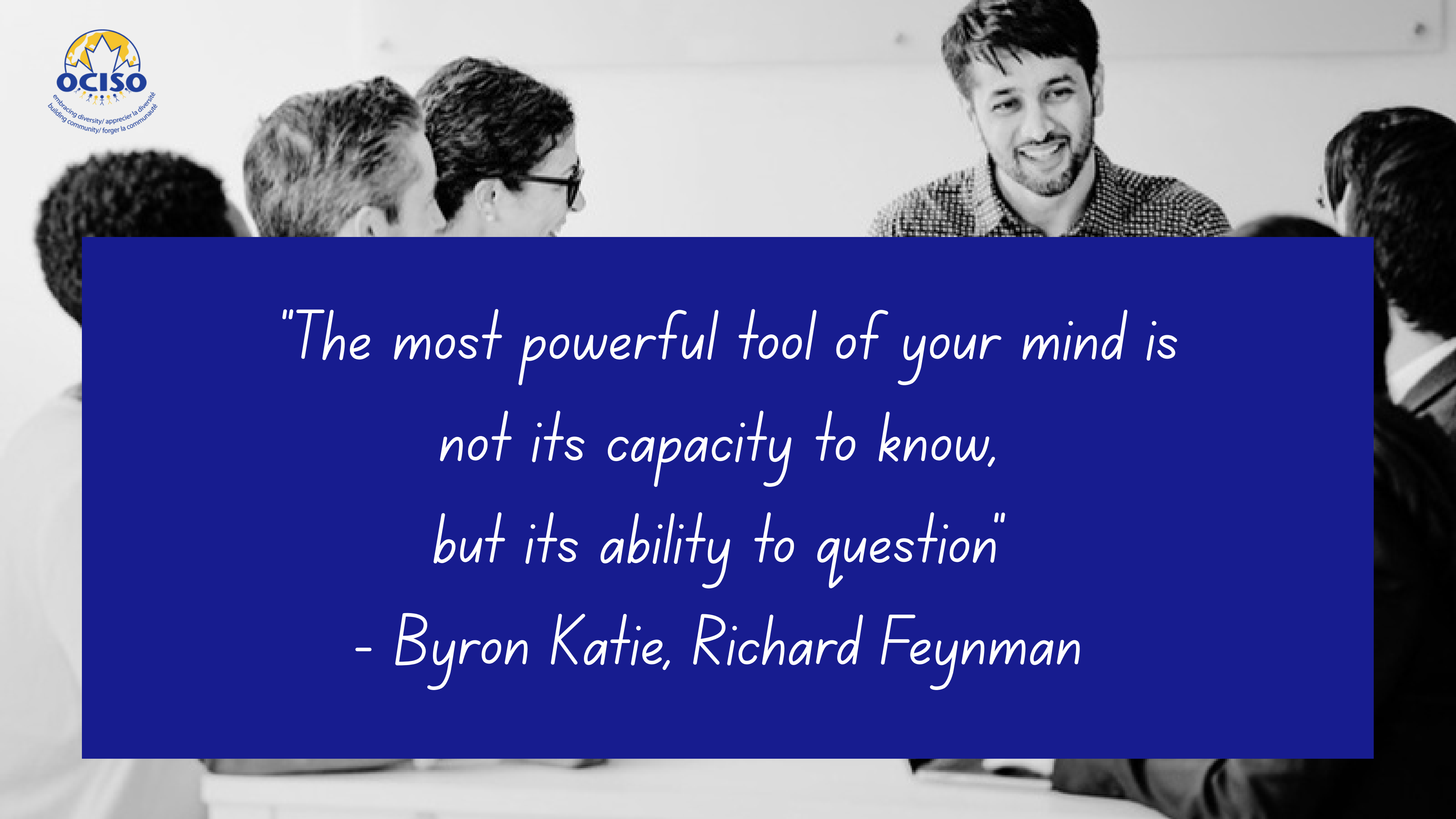
- What approach could work best for you?
- What can we do to resolve this together?
- What other options could you explore?
- How could we make this idea work better for you?
- Is there a way to meet both X's and Y's needs?

Questions to Explore Consequences

- What options do we have if we can't reach an agreement today?
- Are you planning to [specific action]?
- What challenges might come with this idea?
- If we go ahead with this and ___ happens, what would be the next step?

Questions to Confirm Agreement

- Does this solution work for everyone?
- Have we addressed all key points?
- Is there anything you're still unsure or uncomfortable about?



*"The most powerful tool of your mind is
not its capacity to know,
but its ability to question"*
- Byron Katie, Richard Feynman



THANK YOU

SWIS – Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program