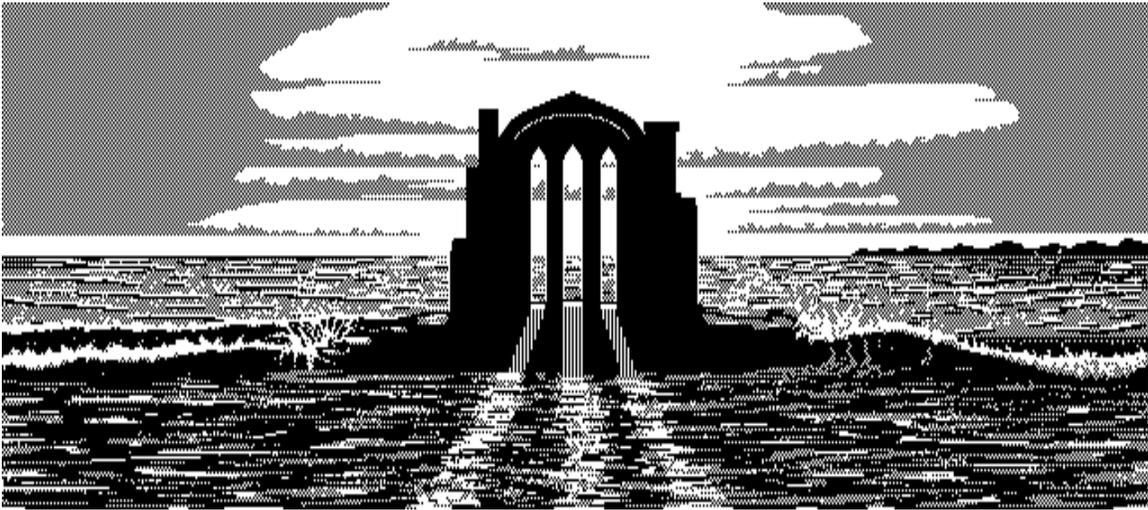


# **Action for Access: Opening the Doors to Diverse Seniors Communities**



**A project of  
“In the Picture” Seniors Initiative**

*The views expressed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Department of National Health and Welfare.*

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**“When we only talk among ourselves, all we get back are echoes. But when we talk with others of a different mind, we are made to think. And it is in thinking that we learn, and in learning that we grow.”**

**(Romeo Leblanc, on his first day as Governor General of Canada)**

## **Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due**

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- ❖ Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples
- ❖ Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre
- ❖ Dixon Hall
- ❖ First Portuguese Seniors Centre
- ❖ Portuguese Women 55+ Support Group of Ontario
- ❖ South Asian Seniors Rexdale
- ❖ St. Christopher House
- ❖ St. Stephen's Community House
- ❖ Woodgreen Community Centre

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**Action for Access: Opening the Doors to Diverse Seniors' Communities  
Evaluation**

We hope that you've found our video and manual useful. We would appreciate your feedback.

1. Describe your organization or group

2. Did you find the package easy to use?

Easy 1 2 3 4 5 Difficult

3. What was your purpose in getting the package?

4. Was the package useful for your purpose(s)?

Not useful 1 2 3 4 5 Very useful

5. What were the most useful parts of the package for you?

6. What were the least useful parts of the package for you?

**Thank You!**

Responses may be sent to:

**"In the Picture" Seniors Initiative  
c/o St. Christopher House  
248 Ossington Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M6J 3A2**

# 1.0 Introduction



The Toronto Association of Neighbourhood Services (TANS) is a coalition of agencies that serve a wide range of individuals and community groups. TANS member agencies serve the needs of diverse communities including low-income seniors, frail elderly, homeless and socially isolated adults, children, victims of domestic violence, immigrants and refugees, physically disabled and otherwise house-bound individuals, unemployed youth and people who are socially marginalized due to illiteracy, ill-health or discrimination.

In 1991, TANS organized an event to talk and learn more about federal cuts and how people could get “in the picture” and feel included. Topics discussed included women’s issues, immigrant and refugee issues, welfare and employment issues and seniors and health.

From this initial event, the seniors’ group continued to meet. Eventually, through the support of TANS and a small grant from the Seniors Independence Program, Health Canada, the participants organized themselves into a formal group that is known today as “In the Picture” Seniors Initiative.

Organizations participating in this collective include: \*Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre, Dixon Hall, \*First Portuguese Seniors Centre, \*Portuguese Women 55+ Support Group of Ontario, \*South Asian Seniors Rexdale, St. Christopher House, St. Stephen’s Community House, and Woodgreen Community Centre.

(\*Not TANS agencies, but our partners!)

This group collaborates in providing opportunities for seniors from across Toronto to:

- 1) increase their understanding of the impacts of policies on the programs and services they access;**
- 2) develop an understanding that promotes solutions to economic and social problems; and**
- 3) voice their concerns and issues.**

In February of 1996, through the support of the Toronto Association of Neighbourhood Services (TANS) and New Horizons - Partners in Aging, Health Canada, “In the Picture” Seniors Initiative began work on an accessibility project. The project’s objective was to develop a manual and video to assist agencies and groups that would like to include seniors with varying language abilities and seniors with low literacy in their events and programs.

## **1.1 What This Manual Is About**

“In the Picture” Seniors Initiative has identified a number of barriers that senior program participants face.

These barriers include such things as:

- language barriers;
- low literacy/educational levels;
- limited access to information; and
- limited opportunities for participation in debates concerning the policies that affect their lives.

“In the Picture” Seniors Initiative actively works with its seniors participants towards overcoming these barriers. This has been facilitated through the development of:

- clear language materials/workshops;
- translation of education materials;
- simultaneous interpretation at meetings/workshops through the use of transmitters and headsets; and
- consecutive interpretation at meetings/workshops.

Sharing our experiences in helping seniors to overcome language and literacy barriers is what this manual is all about. Helping others to be more inclusive of the diverse seniors communities they serve is the ultimate goal of this project.

## **1.2 Who This Manual Is Intended For**

We hope that this manual will be of help to those of you who, like us, want to be inclusive of all of the

seniors in your community. Specifically, to assist agencies and groups that would like to include seniors with varying language abilities and seniors with low literacy in their events and programs. We have tried to write and organize this manual so that it will be of use to you, whether you work with a small grassroots group or a large agency that serves older adults.

Our strategies are not perfect. We are constantly striving to build upon what we already know and to learn from our mistakes. This being said, however, the manual will serve as a good foundation for you to learn from and build upon. For those of you who have very limited experience working in this area, we hope this manual will give you the confidence and inspiration to move forward towards inclusion of all seniors in your community.

Some of you may have already developed similar or alternative strategies that work well for you. For you, we hope that this manual will serve as a reinforcement of the work you are already doing as well as allow you to further build and develop your strategies.

### **1.3 Why This Manual Is Important**

Canada's population is not an ethnically nor culturally homogeneous one. In Ontario alone, the immigrant population makes up 25% of the province's total population. It is estimated that over the next 20 years, immigration will account for up to 40% of the province's total population growth. (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship. 1991)

Like the general population, Ontario's aged population is neither ethnically nor culturally homogeneous. Approximately 17% of Ontarians born outside of Canada are 65 years of age or older compared with only 9% of Ontarians born in Canada. (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship. 1991) Since 1986, the number of new immigrants arriving in Ontario with no official language abilities has been increasing. (Official language ability refers to the ability of an individual to speak at least one of Canada's official languages: English and French.) In 1988, approximately 55% of new immigrants to Ontario aged 65 and over did not have official language abilities. (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship. 1991) The lack of official language skills creates

communication problems that may often lead to isolation and dependence upon family members and friends for these seniors.

In 1991, a report on adult literacy in Canada was released. Statistics stated that 65% of Canada's elderly experience some degree of difficulty with printed material. (Ross. 1991) The implications of these statistics are enormous, as research has shown that there is a clear connection between literacy and health, independence and well-being.

The members of "In the Picture" believe that everyone, regardless of their language abilities, literacy level, culture, race, gender, age or socio-economic background has a right to participate in our group and make their voices heard. Many of those who agree with us say, "Well yes, everyone has a right to participate and make their voices heard, but why don't you just run activities specific to each language group and/or literacy level?"

Yes, at each of the individual centres we do run activities and groups targeted to specific language groups and/or literacy levels. However, like our Governor General, we too believe that when we only talk among ourselves, we only get back echoes; we are alone and isolated; we don't know how other people feel or what they think. As a result, both our personal and collective growth and development are limited.

The problems and issues facing seniors today are growing and constantly changing. As a result, seniors need to have a strong and unified voice to make their concerns known. When we are able to talk and interact with others from diverse backgrounds, we are able to share our ideas and beliefs as well as learn and grow from each other's experiences. We are able to break down the mistaken beliefs or negative opinions we often have of each other. No longer is there a feeling of "us" and "them", there is only "us".

These are the advantages of bringing together people from diverse backgrounds despite the many barriers that usually keep them apart. These are the results that make all of the time and effort that we, at "In the Picture", put into our activities so worthwhile. These are the benefits we know you too will reap if you try to incorporate the strategies outlined in this manual.

## References

Ontario Ministry of Citizenship. (1991) Ontario: A Diverse and Changing Society - A Report on Selected Demographic Trends. Ethnocultural Data Base Materials - Series III Special Report No. 5.

Ross, David P. (1991) Literacy and Old Age in Canada: The Results of the LSUDA Survey. in Adult Literacy in Canada: Results of A National Survey. Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology.

## 2.0 Cross-Cultural Communication



An important part of our work is being able to bridge communication, not only between groups with diverse language abilities and literacy levels, but across cultures. The following section outlines some basic guidelines that will not only improve cross-cultural communication, but communication in general.

### 2.1 Getting To Know Your Community

One of the most important steps in improving communication is getting to know your community or target audience. Getting to know your community includes increasing your awareness and understanding of ethnicity, race, class, gender and age. This is a critical step, as it may determine the success or failure of your overall communication plan. There are several sources that may assist you in getting to know your community: one's own professional knowledge base and skill set; individuals within your organization or group; individuals or groups within the community; and statistical data.

#### A. One's Own Professional Knowledge Base And Skill Set

This is the most obvious place to start. From experiences, both past and present, you may have some good ideas or leads to assist you in developing a communication strategy with your target audience(s).

#### B. Individuals Within The Organization

Most often, deciding what information one wants to get across and to whom one wants to deliver the information comes from individuals or groups within the organization which serves a particular community or communities. Although this may be a valuable source of information, it should not be the only source used in determining what information one wants to convey and to whom. Since this information is

subjective, it may be influenced by one's own ideas, values and attitudes as they relate to the issue. Secondly, the information is often based only on the clients the organization serves, thereby excluding input from the larger community.

## **C. Individuals Or Groups Within The Community**

A third source of information comes directly or indirectly from individuals within the community who utilize services provided by the organization(s). Who better knows the needs of the community than community members themselves? When using information from these sources, one must always consider whether or not these individuals speak for the larger community or target group they appear to represent.

## **D. Statistical Data**

A fourth type of information is statistical data. This data comes from a variety of sources such as census information or needs assessments. This is the most objective information source.



**TIP:** *There is no one source of information that can best assist you in developing your communication strategy. A combination of the above sources will serve as a strong foundation on which to build your communication strategy.*

## **2.2 Culturally Appropriate Communication**

In any discussion of communication, one must remember that communication is a two-way process involving culture, values and assumptions. Therefore, effective communication requires both an acknowledgment and understanding of culture and values. When working within a multicultural environment, we must remember that there are both acceptable and unacceptable issues that may be discussed. There are also acceptable and unacceptable ways to discuss a particular subject. The acceptability of these issues may depend on a lot of factors, including such things as gender, class,

ethnicity and age. One must also remember that words and phrases may take on very different meanings in different cultures. Having a thorough understanding of both your own culture and values as well as that of your target audience will reduce the possibilities for misunderstandings and bad feelings later on.

This is not to imply that cross-cultural communication is impossible. What this does mean is that you have to work harder at cross-cultural communication than at communication within your own cultural group. The process may also be a little slower, but from our experience, it is well worth the effort in the end.

## 3.0 Interpretation



Interpretation is an important component of almost every meeting, workshop or forum arranged by “In the Picture”. When we use the word, “interpretation”, we mean the verbal translation of ideas or information from one language to another.

### 3.1 Types Of Interpretation

“In the Picture” typically uses two different types of interpretation: simultaneous interpretation and consecutive interpretation. The type of interpretation used depends on the situation.

#### A. Simultaneous Interpretation

Simultaneous interpretation occurs when someone translates what the speaker is saying at the same time as the person is speaking. Simultaneous interpretation requires a great deal of skill on the part of the interpreter and may be very challenging, especially for those not experienced in this type of interpretation.

From our experiences, this type of interpretation works best in small group settings where only 2 or 3 different languages are being spoken, such as a committee meeting.

To facilitate this process and to reduce the noise and disruption for all participants, we have purchased a special system from the Canadian Hearing Society. This system consists of transmitters and receivers. The transmitter is a small, portable, radio-like device with a small microphone attached. The interpreter is able to translate quietly into the microphone. The participants requiring interpretation have the receivers. Like the transmitters, the receivers are small, portable, radio-like devices that have a set of headphones attached. They pick up the transmission from the interpreter.

If you have more than one language being translated, you will need both transmitters and receivers with different radio frequencies. This system has allowed us to bring our members to a number of meetings and events that they would not normally be able to attend because of language barriers.

While this system used for interpretation is quite good, there are several drawbacks. Wearing the headsets, combined with static interference and the quality of sound makes this type of interpretation tiring for the participants. For these reasons, it is best to use the hearing devices for shorter periods of time.



**TIP:** *While this system is very effective, it is also quite expensive. If you would like to use this type of system, you may want to consider purchasing it with another group and sharing, renting it or borrowing it from another organization.*

You may use simultaneous interpretation without the interpretation devices if there are only two languages being spoken at a meeting. Without the interpretation devices, however, there tends to be a great deal more background noise which makes listening and participating difficult for everyone involved.

## **B. Consecutive Interpretation**

In consecutive interpretation, someone speaks briefly, expressing one idea or point, and then stops. When the speaker stops, the interpreter translates what has just been said. The process is then repeated over and over again.

This method of interpretation does not require any special equipment. Therefore, it costs less and is able to accommodate a larger number of people than simultaneous interpretation. This is the method of interpretation most often used by “In the Picture”, especially at our large forums and workshops where we often have up to 6 different languages spoken.

## **3.2 Preparing For Interpretation**

Being able to use successfully either method of interpretation requires a great deal of work. We have developed a set of guidelines to assist you throughout the process from planning to implementation.

### **3.2.1. Planning**

Planning, well in advance of the actual event, is critical to being able to use either method of interpretation successfully. In planning any major workshop or forum, “In the Picture” always establishes a Special Planning Committee.

As part of the planning process, the Committee focuses a great deal of its time on preparing for the interpretation that will take place at the event. The planning process for interpretation includes locating speakers or facilitators who understand and are comfortable with the special issues surrounding interpretation, appropriate interpreters, locating an appropriate space to hold the event, determining how many people will be able to attend the event and advertising for the event.

The Committee is also responsible for arranging meetings, if necessary, to educate both the speakers and the interpreters about the subject matter of the forum/workshop and the interpretation process. The specific details concerning these issues will be discussed further in the next few sections.

### **3.2.2 Determining The Number Of Language Groups And Participants**

Two important parts of planning to incorporate interpretation into a meeting or event are deciding how many different language groups you will be able to accommodate and the total number of people that will be able to participate.

#### **A. Language Groups**

How many different language groups you will be able to accommodate will depend on several things. The number of language groups your agency or group may serve is often determined by the actual number of

different language groups in your area. As the “In the Picture” agencies and groups come from different locations within Metro Toronto, they individually serve anywhere from 2 to 4 different language groups. As a collective of these agencies and groups, “In the Picture” often serves 6 different language groups.

The interest of various language groups in the planned activity or event is also a deciding factor. Although “In the Picture” agencies serve a number of different language groups, not all of our activities or workshop topics are of interest to all groups.

Resources are another important factor in determining the number of language groups you are able to accommodate. You may have a specific language group that is very interested in participating, but you may not be able to locate someone who would be willing or capable of providing interpretation for the group. While this is a legitimate factor that limits the number of language groups that are able to participate, it should not be used as an excuse to exclude people. Financial resources, as discussed in the next section, are also part of this decision.



**TIP:** *At large events, we identify the language groups to which people belong with colour-coded dots placed on their name tags. This helps the participants and volunteers to locate their appropriate group despite language barriers.*

## **B. Total Number Of Participants**

Once you have decided on the number of language groups that will be able to participate, you will have to decide on the total number of participants you are able to accommodate. This will depend on several factors. The most important is the actual holding capacity of the location you have chosen for the event. In order to comply with fire and safety regulations as well as to ensure the comfort of your participants, you do not want to exceed the maximum seating capacity of the facility you are using.

Secondly, you have to take into consideration your staffing and volunteer resources. As you know, carrying out an event of any size requires a certain number of people. This is especially true at an event

where interpretation is being provided. Make sure that the number of participants does not exceed the capacities of staff and volunteers.

Your financial resources are a final deciding factor. Depending on the type of event you are planning, you may run into expenses in order to provide such things as transportation and food for participants, photocopying, educational materials, supplies, honorariums for speaker and interpreters, etceteras. The total amount of these expenses will depend on the number of participants you have.



**TIP:** *If you are organizing an event where interpretation is being provided for the first time, we recommend that you limit the number of participants. Even with experience and careful planning, running an event where interpretation is taking place is still a major undertaking. It is better to start with several small successes rather than one huge failure!*

### **3.2.3 Advertising**

When advertising for an event where interpretation is taking place, there are several key things to remember:

#### **A. Mention That Interpretation Is Taking Place!**

While this may seem like an obvious thing to do, the failure to do so may be disastrous. Making sure potential participants and speakers know what to expect is important, especially if they are not familiar with attending events where interpretation takes place. This will not only help to ensure that all participants are respectful of the interpretation process, but will prevent any bad feelings due to lack of information or misunderstanding. Moreover, it will ensure that everyone feels comfortable and prepared.

## **B. Mention The Language(s) In Which Interpretation Is Being Provided**

Again, this may seem obvious, but it prevents misunderstandings from arising and also helps you to attract participants to your event from the designated language groups.

## **C. Mention That Attendance Must Be Confirmed In Advance**

You don't want any unpleasant surprises on the day of your event. "In the Picture" took part in a large seniors' forum several years ago where over 800 seniors showed up and there was only seating for 500! This caused a great deal of confusion and discomfort for both the participants and the organizers.

It is not only important to know how many people are coming, but how many are coming from each language group. This information is essential in order to make sure there are enough interpreters and so that seating can be appropriately arranged.



**TIP:** *Be sure to use both written and verbal forms of advertising, as literacy levels may vary within your target audiences. If possible, you should also try to translate any promotional materials into the languages of the participating or targeted groups.*

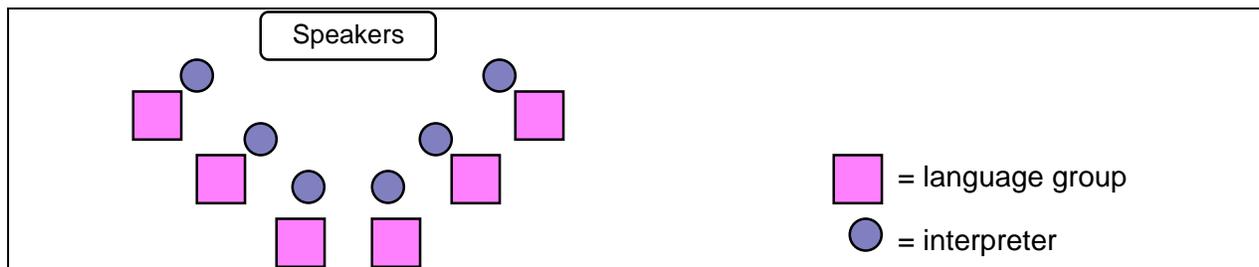
### **3.2.4 Physical Set-Up**

Whether one is using simultaneous interpretation or consecutive interpretation, the physical set-up of the location where the event is held is an important part of the interpretation process.

"In the Picture" always groups people by their specific language needs. This helps to reduce the number of people required to interpret as well as reducing confusion and noise levels. In the past, some people have commented that they feel uncomfortable with people being grouped or "segregated" according to language. While we respect these concerns, we feel more uncomfortable with excluding people or limiting people's full participation in our activities due to language and literacy barriers. Moreover, we

always try to build in opportunities for greater interaction between language groups at our events such as small group discussions, games, etceteras.

“In the Picture” has found that facilities with an amphitheater-like arrangement are the most appropriate for interpretation for large groups of people. This is the arrangement of seats in a semi-circle that rises up towards the back of the room. This type of arrangement facilitates not only the projection of the interpreters’ voices, but the ability of participants to clearly see the speakers and any overheads or charts. As this type of space is sometimes difficult to come by, we often have to use the typical flat open space provided in a hall or auditorium. If we are using this type of space, groups are again seated according to language. We always try to put a space between the groups and separate groups with similar languages (i.e. Spanish and Portuguese) to reduce the amount of interference for each of the groups. (Refer to diagram)



If we are bringing a small group to a large event we normally would use the interpretation system that we purchased from the Canadian Hearing Society. In order to minimize the disruption for other participants, we normally try to be seated near the back of the room or concentrated in one corner. We also ask the program organizers to inform the other participants that this type of interpretation will be taking place to avoid misunderstandings.

At small group meetings, we normally use either consecutive or simultaneous interpretation, although we prefer to use simultaneous interpretation with the assistance of our interpretation system purchased from the Canadian Hearing Society. Again, the groups are seated according to language.

### 3.3 Guidelines For Effective Interpretation

In order to make the process of interpretation as easy, smooth and painless as possible for everyone involved, we have developed a number of simple guidelines for presenters or speakers, interpreters and participants.

### **3.3.1 Guidelines For Presenters**

While many people are used to making presentations or speaking to groups, most people have never made a presentation to a group where interpretation takes place or where the educational levels and literacy levels of participants varies greatly. While this challenge has always been positive for our speakers, they always thank us for preparing them in advance. There are several general principles that we, at "In the Picture" ask all presenters to follow:

#### **A. Keep It Simple!**

Everyone is asked to use clear language in their presentations, avoiding jargon. Simple, direct language is more effective and easier for participants to understand and for the interpreters to translate.

#### **B. Put It In Writing**

We ask all speakers to have their presentations written out and available one week prior to the event. If this is not possible, as a minimum, we request an outline of the presentation. Having a written text to work from not only allows the interpreter to translate more quickly, but eases the work of the interpreter. It also allows the group time to review the speakers' materials and give them feedback as to how appropriate and/or understandable their material will be for the target audience. It also provides the interpreters the opportunity to ask questions or get more information about any ideas or information they will be expected to convey to participants.

#### **C. Be Prepared To Stop**

We ask presenters to be prepared to make frequent stops throughout their presentations for

interpretation. It is best to stop after making a major point or expressing a major idea. (i.e. at the end of a short paragraph) Having materials prepared in advance allows the interpreters to review the material and make suggestions for break points.

If scripts are not provided or cannot be provided for some reason, interpreters should be given appropriate background information (i.e. newspaper clippings, newsletters, etc.) to acquaint them with the issues that will be discussed.

## **D. Watch Your Time!**

If it took you 5 minutes to say something, it is going to take approximately 5 minutes to translate what was said into another language. Therefore, every presentation is actually doubled in length. As a result, if you only have, let's say, 20 minutes to speak, your presentation should not be any longer than 10 minutes (not including time for translation). Timing your presentation in advance will make sure that you do not run out of time and have to scramble at the last minute to cut pieces from your presentation.

**We have developed a one-page handout that covers all of this information and that is given to all of our speakers well in advance Please refer to Appendix 1**

## **3.3.2 Guidelines For Interpreters**

While many people are used to interpreting or translating, many people have never had to do this under time constraints or for a diverse group of people. While this challenge has always been positive for our interpreters, it is wise to be prepared. There are several general principles that we, at "In the Picture", ask all interpreters to follow:

### **A. Keep It Simple!**

We ask interpreters to use clear language in their interpretations, avoiding jargon. Even though a group may all speak a common language, levels of understanding and literacy often vary greatly. Simple, direct language is more effective and easier for participants to understand.

## **B. Summarize**

We ask that all interpretations are kept clear and concise. Interpreters are asked not to interpret word for word, but summarize what has been said. This allows the meeting or event to move along at an even pace and keeps participants from becoming bored and restless. If further explanation of concepts or ideas is needed by participants, we ask the interpreters to wait until a later opportunity arises.

## **C. Do Your Homework In Advance**

Good interpretation requires the interpreter to have a solid understanding of the subject matter and information that is to be conveyed to the audience. If someone is unclear about the information they are being asked to interpret, we encourage them to speak with one of the organizers for resource/background materials prior to the event.

Whenever possible, it is best to hold an information session with all of the interpreters in advance of the meeting or event to make sure everyone has a common understanding of how interpretation will take place and what is expected of them. It also allows people to share any concerns or ask questions as a group.

**We have developed a one-page handout that covers all of this information and that is given to all of our interpreters in advance Please refer to Appendix 2**

### **3.3.3 Guidelines For Participants**

The preparation of participants for meetings and events is as important as the preparation of both interpreters and speakers. This makes sure that participants know exactly what is going to happen concerning the interpretation and helps them to fully participate in the meeting or event. There are a couple of steps to this process:

#### **A. Make Sure Participants Understand The Interpretation Process**

The most important step in preparing participants is making sure they understand how the interpretation will take place. Obviously, there will be periods of time when people will have to be patient while interpretation is taking place for their fellow participants. This can be frustrating if someone is not aware that this will be taking place. Participants must also be reminded to be quiet while interpretation is taking place, or else you end up with everyone talking and no-one being able to listen. Similarly, participants waiting for interpretation to take place must also be reminded to be quiet.

#### **B. Make Sure Participants Understand The Issues**

We've all experienced participating in meetings where we have limited knowledge of the issues being discussed. As previously mentioned, although very effective, interpretation limits the amount of time one has to go over materials and cover information. Therefore, an important step, if possible, is to brief participants on what is going to be covered in the meeting. This works best if done fairly close to the actual meeting or event so that things are fresh in everyone's minds. This is not only important for participants but for interpreters as well. We encourage our own members to hold preparatory workshops at their individual centres prior to participating in the larger event.

This doesn't have to be a lengthy or detailed review. The idea is to make sure everyone has an understanding of the issues that will be discussed at the meeting. This allows you to cover more material and move at a faster pace. This also helps to ensure the meaningful participation of all involved.

## 4.0 Translation



When making the decision to translate written materials, there are 3 major factors one must consider: evidence of need for the information; cost; and literacy levels of target groups.

### A. Evidence Of Need For The Information

The first and most important factor one must consider when making the decision to translate written materials is whether your target audience wants or needs the information you are planning to translate. Remember, just because you think the information is useful and important does not necessarily mean your target audience feels the same way. Talk to people within your target audience first. Make sure you talk to a number of different people within the target community, however, because opinions regarding the value of and need for the information may vary widely.



**TIP:** *You don't want to spend time and money re-inventing the wheel. Before you translate a document, make sure something similar doesn't already exist out there that would meet your community's needs. Most groups are happy to share their information, as long as they receive credit for its use. This being said, however, be sure to get permission before you reproduce or modify any information or documents.*

### B. Cost

Translation is a difficult job that requires a great deal of time and skill. As a result, professional translation services may be very expensive. If you do not have a great deal of money to spend, you may want to consider finding a volunteer to assist you with this.



 **TIP:** *If you choose to enlist the services of volunteers, make sure that all involved are recognized for their work. You will also want to share your newly developed resources with other groups or organizations that have similar needs.*

## **C. Literacy Level Of Target Group**

When making the decision to translate written materials, one must also take into account the literacy level of the target audience. While many people may be able to speak a language, they may have limited abilities to read and/or write the language. Within any language-specific community or group, literacy skills may vary depending on age, gender, educational levels and social class.



 **TIP:** *To help you determine the literacy level of your target audience, you may want to consult some of the existing databases with information about literacy, language abilities and basic demographic information. You should also hold focus groups or testing sessions to determine what works better for your target audience. This may take extra work, but we always find this to be useful.*

## **4.1 Guidelines For Written Translation**

If after considering these three factors you decide to translate your written materials, there are some simple guidelines that you will want to follow to help you end up with a good product.

### **A. Write The Original Copy In Easy To Read, Clear Language**

Before a document is translated, you should try to eliminate awkward language and terminology that is difficult to get across in another language. If you must use terminology, be sure to explain its meaning up-front in as clear a manner as possible.



 **TIP:** *It is best to have someone else proof-read your document for clarity before you send it off for translation. If possible, try to have someone from the target audience or someone who is familiar with the target audience assist you in this process.*

## **B. Discuss Translation Style And Content With The Translator Before You Begin**

Even though someone may be able to translate written material from one language to another, this does not necessarily mean they will be able to deliver your message to the target audience as you intended it to be delivered. This may happen for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the translator may not fully understand the ideas or message that you want to deliver. Secondly, the translator may translate your message at a level of understanding or literacy that is above that of your target group.

By talking with your translators before they begin the translation, you can make sure they are familiar with the message or ideas you want to deliver. This may require a bit of instruction from you or a member of your target audience. At this time, you can also make sure the translator is familiar with the literacy levels of the target audience.

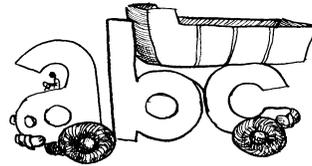
## **C. Review The Translated Documents**

Before you reproduce and distribute your translated document, you will want to have it proof-read by another person with the appropriate language skills. If possible, this person should be a member of your target audience or someone who works very closely with them.



 **TIP:** *When translating written materials, you may also want to consider the cultural appropriateness of the information or message to be conveyed as well as the style or way in which the information is delivered.*

## 5.0 Clear Language Materials



An important part of all of our work, including translation and interpretation, is to use clear, simple language. As we have previously stated, literacy levels may vary greatly within a specific group or groups of people. Therefore, the use of simple language increases not only the understanding, but the acceptability of materials for a large number of people. In some instances, the use of clear, simple language has eliminated the need for translation or interpretation. Even if it does not completely eliminate the need for translation or interpretation, it will greatly simplify the processes.

### 5.1 Guidelines for Developing and Evaluating Materials

While this may seem like a fairly straightforward process, we have developed the following guidelines to assist you in developing clear language materials:

#### **A. Make Sure The Information Is Understandable**

Make sure that all materials are written in clear, easy to understand language. An important part of this is making sure that the information provided does not lend itself to different interpretations or misinterpretations.

In attempting to do this, the information provided should be focused on a few simple and related ideas or messages. As well, members of the target audience should be involved in the selection, development and evaluation of the materials.

#### **B. Make Sure The Information Presented Is Culturally Acceptable**

As well as being easy to understand, the information or message to be conveyed should also be culturally appropriate. By culturally appropriate, we mean that the information or language used to convey the

information should not go against cultural norms and traditions. To ensure this, one should seek the input of the target audience in the selection, development and evaluation of the materials. Please refer back to [Section 2.0 - Cross-Cultural Communication](#) to assist you with this task.

## **C. Help The Target Group(s) To Own The Information**

In getting the information out to your target group(s), you will want to make sure that the information or message is important or relevant to the main interests and priorities of the target group(s). The language used should reflect the everyday situation of the target audience(s). Again, we can't emphasize enough the importance of involving the target audience in the selection, development and evaluation of the materials.

## **5.2 Use Of Pictures And Illustrations**

As previously mentioned, illiteracy is not uncommon, no matter what language one speaks. Therefore, the simple translation of the written word is not suitable, at least in isolation, for some groups. According to an old saying, "a picture is worth a thousand words". As a result, the current trend has been towards the development of written materials that are not only clearly written with as few words as possible but illustrated with pictures. For example, at a recent leadership development workshop conducted by one of the "In the Picture" members, the concepts of how an organization functions was illustrated and explained using a diagram of a human body.



 **TIP:** *The pictures or illustrations used must be both culturally relevant and sensitive.*

**We have developed a one-page form to assist you in evaluating all of your written materials.**

**Please refer to Appendix 3**

## 6.0 Challenges Of Change



While the aging process varies greatly for everyone, there are certain deteriorations and changes in both hearing and vision that are fairly common as one ages. These changes may have a significant impact upon your ability to communicate with your target audience, especially when they are coupled with language or literacy barriers.

### 6.1 Hearing

With age, many people experience a deterioration in their ability to hear. In an attempt to correct this problem, some older adults wear hearing aids, which require specific conditions to exist in order for them to be effective.

The following are some basic guidelines developed by the Canadian Hearing Society to assist your communication with hard of hearing people:

#### **A. Slower Please, Not Louder!**

Shouting is embarrassing - and unnecessary. In fact, it can cause discomfort to a hearing aid wearer.

#### **B. The Nearer, The Clearer**

Speak clearly and naturally, perhaps a little slower than usual. Come closer when you speak. "In the Picture" makes sure to seat hard of hearing people as close to speakers as possible.

#### **C. No One Has Eyes in the Back of Their Head**

Many hard of hearing people rely on lip-reading. Wait for them to look at you before you speak. Be careful not to cover your face as you talk to them. "In the Picture" always makes sure that people with hearing problems are facing speakers at meetings and events.

## D. The Same - Only Different

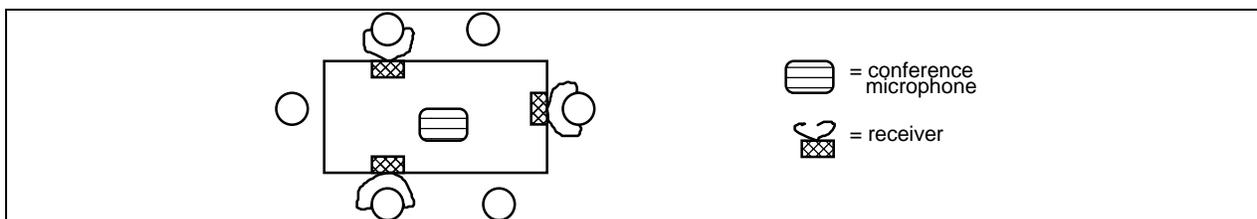
If you notice that he or she did not hear what was said, try re-phrasing rather than repeating. Hard of hearing people often hesitate to ask, so be alert to help them when they miss something.

## E. Quiet Please!

Distracting background noise can make it very difficult for hard of hearing people to participate in meeting and events. "In the Picture" also makes sure that people talk one at a time. Meetings are always held in rooms that are free from noise from nearby programs or activities, heating or air-conditioning equipment, etceteras.



**TIP:** You may want to use pictures and illustration to aid in verbal communication. To assist those people who may be hard of hearing, but do not own hearing aids, "In the Picture" has purchased a table-top conference microphone that can be used in conjunction with the receivers normally used for interpretation. The conference microphone is placed in the centre of the table which then picks up and amplifies conversation through the headsets on the receivers. (Refer to diagram)



## **6.2 Vision**

With age, many people experience a change or deterioration in their ability to see. The following are some basic guidelines to assist with your communication with people who have visual impairments:

### **A. The Nearer, The Clearer**

If you are having any sort of a visual presentation at a meeting or event (i.e. overheads, slides, film), make sure you seat the people with visual impairments close to where the visual presentation is being made.

### **B. Keep It Light**

Make sure you hold your meetings or events in a room that is adequately lit. Remember, that too much light or glaring light may be just as problematic as too little light for someone with a visual impairment.

### **C. Now...I See**

In developing written text or making visual presentations, there are a couple of points to keep in mind. First, make sure there is a strong contrast between what is being written on (i.e. blackboard, flip-cart, piece of paper) and what is being written with (i.e. chalk, marker, pen). The majority of our participants prefer black writing on a white background. Also make sure the text or image is fairly large. Although smaller text and images may save you money on paper and photocopying, they may cost you in terms of the lack of usage of the materials by people with visual impairments.

**We have summarized these tips in 1 page fact sheets. Please refer to Appendices 4a and 4b.**

## 7.0 Moving Beyond Words To Action



Now that you have finished reading this manual, we hope that you are ready to begin implementing some of the ideas and suggestions found throughout. For some of you, however, there are probably still doubts as to how you would begin to put these principles and ideas into action. Just remember that all older adults, regardless of their language abilities and literacy levels, have the right to fully participate in society. We, as community workers, group organizers or group participants, have an obligation to our fellow citizens.

Remember, you don't have to incorporate or implement all of the suggestions in this manual overnight. "In the Picture" has taken a number of years to develop our methods of practice. Start with what you and your group/staff feel comfortable with. Even if you just test-out or implement one or two of our suggestions, you will have taken a major step forward. Modify our ideas to suit your particular group or situation. **Just get started!**

We realize that this type of work takes a great deal of time and energy, but the end results are well worth it... and practice does make it easier! The testimonials of many of our group members in the video clearly confirm this. We must remember that whether we adopt inclusive practices or not is a matter of choice. The choices that we make, however, will ultimately determine the kind of community we live in.

Throughout our years of work, we have heard numerous reasons and excuses from others as to why they cannot or are unwilling to make an effort to include people with language and literacy barriers in their activities. You may have thought of some of your own as you read through this manual. As a result, we have developed a:



**TOP 10 LIST OF REASONS PEOPLE GIVE FOR TRYING TO OVERCOME LANGUAGE AND LITERACY BARRIERS**

1. You have to accommodate and work closely with people to help them grow and move beyond their language and literacy barriers.
2. It feels good.
3. It works!
4. It creates opportunities for cross-cultural communication.
5. It breaks down stereotypes.
6. It's inclusive.
7. It puts everyone on the "same level".
8. It increases participation.
9. It allows you to get feedback from your community.
10. It's our responsibility.

**GOOD LUCK!**



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**If you would like more information about this manual and video or would like to order additional copies please contact:**

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Toronto, Ontario M6J 3A2  
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# Appendix 1

## Guidelines For Presenters

### **A. Keep It Simple!**

Please use clear language in your presentation, avoiding jargon. Simple, direct language is more effective and easier for participants to understand and for the interpreters to translate.

### **B. Put It In Writing**

We ask that you have your presentation written out and available one week prior to the event. Having a written text to work from not only allows the interpreter to translate more quickly, but allows the group time to review your materials and give you feedback as to how appropriate and/or understandable your material will be for the target audience.

### **C. Be Prepared to Stop**

We ask that you be prepared to make periodic stops throughout your presentations for translation. It is best to stop after making a major point or expressing a major idea. (i.e. at the end of a short paragraph) Having materials prepared in advance allows the interpreters to review the material and make suggestions for break points.

### **D. Watch Your Time!**

If it took you 5 minutes to say something, it is going to take approximately 5 minutes to translate what was said into another language. Therefore, every presentation is actually doubled in length. Timing your presentation in advance will ensure that you do not run out of time and have to scramble at the last minute to cut pieces from your presentation.

# Appendix 2

## Guidelines for Interpreters

### **A. Keep It Simple!**

We ask that you use clear language in your translations, avoiding jargon. Even though a group may all speak a common language, levels of understanding and literacy often vary greatly. Simple, direct language is not only more effective and easier for participants to understand, it makes it easier to convey ideas and information.

### **B. Summarize**

We ask that all translations are kept clear and concise. Do not translate word for word, but summarize what has been said. This allows the meeting or event to move along at an even pace and keeps participants from becoming bored and restless. If further explanation of concepts or ideas is needed by participants, we ask that you wait until a later opportunity arises.

### **C. Do Your Homework in Advance**

If you are unclear about the information you are being asked to interpret, we encourage you to speak with one of the organizers for resource/background materials prior to the event.

**If possible, we will hold an information session with all of the interpreters in advance of the meeting or event to make sure everyone has a common understanding of how interpretation will take place and what is expected of them. If a meeting is scheduled, you will be invited.**

# Appendix 3

## Evaluation Criteria for Written Materials

On a scale of 1 to 5, rate the extent to which the following criteria are met, with 1 = **not met at all** and 5 = **totally met**.

1. Did the target audience participate in the selection, development or planning of materials?	1 2 3 4 5
2. Are other materials available to reinforce this message?	1 2 3 4 5
3. Have materials been pre-tested before being finalized?	1 2 3 4 5
4. Is the content or message easily understood?	1 2 3 4 5
5. Does it use language easily understood by the target audience?	1 2 3 4 5
6. Does it avoid information overload?	1 2 3 4 5
7. Has care been taken to ensure that the material is both culturally relevant and sensitive?	1 2 3 4 5
8. Was the material developed according to the target audience's educational level, geographic and socio-economic characteristics?	1 2 3 4 5
9. Is the text large enough to be easily read?	1 2 3 4 5
10. Are there illustrations to compliment the written parts?	1 2 3 4 5
<b>TOTAL: ____</b>	

**DECISION:**

Use As Is	(40 - 50 points)	_____
Needs Revisions	(26 - 39 points)	_____
Rejected	(25 points or less)	_____

**COMMENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 4a

## Tips for Working with People with Hearing Impairments

**Slower Please, Not Louder!** - Shouting is embarrassing - and unnecessary. In fact, it can cause discomfort to a hearing aid wearer.

**The Nearer, The Clearer** - Speak clearly and naturally, perhaps a little slower than usual. Come closer when you speak. Make sure to seat hard of hearing people as close to speakers as possible.

**No One Has Eyes In The Back Of Their Head** - Many hard of hearing people rely on lip-reading. Wait for them to look at you before you speak. Be careful not to cover your face as you talk to them. Always makes sure that people with hearing problems are facing speakers at meetings and events.

**The Same - Only Different** - If you notice that he or she did not hear what was said, try re-phrasing rather than repeating. Hard of hearing people often hesitate to ask, so be alert to help them when they miss something.

**Quiet Please!** - Distracting background noise can make it very difficult for hard of hearing people to participate in meetings and events. Make sure that people talk one at a time. Meetings should always be held in rooms that are free from noise from nearby programs or activities, heating or air-conditioning equipment, etceteras.

# Appendix 4b

## Tips for Working with People with Visual Impairments

**The Nearer, The Clearer** - If you are having any sort of a visual presentation at a meeting or event (i.e. overheads, slides, film), make sure you seat the people with visual impairments close to where the visual presentation is being made.

**Keep It Light** - Make sure you hold your meetings or events in a room that is adequately lit. Remember, that too much light or glaring light may be just as problematic as too little light for someone with a visual impairment.

**Now...I See** - In developing written text or making visual presentations, there are a couple of points to keep in mind. First, make sure there is a strong contrast between what is being written on (i.e. blackboard, flip-cart, piece of paper) and what is being written with (i.e. chalk, marker, pen). The majority of our participants prefer black writing on a white background. Also make sure the text or image is fairly large. Although smaller text and images may save you money on paper and photocopying, they may cost you in terms of the lack of usage of the materials by people with visual impairments.