



Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television Releases Comprehensive Report Recommends Best Practices and Industry-wide Initiatives

Ottawa, July 15, 2004 — The Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television today released its final report and accompanying research study, representing the findings and outcome of nearly two years' work examining the reflection and portrayal of cultural diversity on Canadian private television stations.

Titled *Reflecting Canadians: Best Practices for Cultural Diversity in Private Television*, the 59-page report and 400-page research study represent the most comprehensive content analysis ever undertaken examining cultural diversity on television, anywhere, and will serve as a benchmark for future research. This major research undertaking consisted of five modules: Review of Academic Literature and Previous Content Analyses; Best Practices Review; Stakeholder One-on-One Interviews; Focus Group Research; and Benchmark Content Analysis.

Informed by its research findings, the Task Force developed and recommended Best Practices and Industry Initiatives to assist private Canadian television broadcasters with the overall advancement of reflection and portrayal of cultural diversity on television. "These best practices are intended not only to address gaps or weaknesses uncovered by the research, but also to strengthen the existing initiatives taken for the advancement of cultural diversity in television broadcasting," commented Beverley Oda, Co-Chair of the Task Force.

"We also recognized that while broadcasters can act as a catalyst for change, action is required from all sectors of the industry before systemic change will occur," added Madeline Ziniak, Co-Chair of the Task Force. "To that end, we recommended Industry Initiatives that strongly encourage other industry stakeholders to take action in order to advance diversity goals within their sector."

The Task Force's recommendations were developed in recognition of the fact that the Canadian broadcasting system is a complex industry comprised of a range of businesses, from large corporations with multiple market presence to smaller companies in single markets. Moreover, they also recognize the significant differences that exist between market segments across Canada, between English-language and French-language markets, and smaller and larger markets.

“The Task Force fully recognized the social and market realities in which broadcasters operate and our criteria for the recommended Best Practices and Industry Initiatives were that they be practical to private television broadcasters; that they be measurable over time; and finally, that they be developed for implementation by broadcasters themselves,” noted Madeline Ziniak.

“What distinguishes this report from many others is the fact that the development of the recommended Best Practices has involved broadcasters from the start,” added Beverley Oda. “We are pleased that the Canadian Association of Broadcasters’ (CAB) Television and Specialty & Pay Boards, fully support the work and recommendations of the Task Force and are committed to implementing the recommended Best Practices across Canada.”

In August 2001, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) released Public Notice 2001-88, calling on Canada’s private broadcasters to develop an industry action plan addressing the reflection and portrayal of Canada’s cultural diversity on television. Public Notice 2001-88 further called for the formation of a task force to guide this major initiative. The Task Force was established in 2002, following the development of the action plan on cultural diversity and the acceptance of this plan by the CRTC. It is important to note that, in discussion with the industry and the Commission, the Task Force sought and attained independent, arm’s length status in its activities.

The Task Force was co-chaired by Beverley Oda, and Madeline Ziniak, Vice-President and Station Manager, OMNI Television. The nine-member Task Force was comprised of four non-industry members and five members representing the broadcasting industry. Along with the co-chairs, the members included: Chief Stefany Mathias, Squamish Nation/Next Exit Pictures Ltd.; Marie-Anna Murat, Journalist; Raj Rasalingam, President, Pearson~Shoyama Institute; Elaine Ali, Senior Vice-President, CTV Stations Group; Sarah Crawford, Vice-President, Public Affairs, CHUM Limited; Rita Cugini, Vice-President, Regulatory Affairs & Business Development, Alliance Atlantis Communications; and Pierre Lampron, Vice-président, Relations institutionnelles, Quebecor Media and President TVA films.

The full report and research study can be found at:
<http://www.cab-acr.ca/english/social/diversity/default.shtm>

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BACKGROUND

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON TELEVISION

In August 2001, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) released Public Notice 2001-88, calling on Canada's private broadcasters to develop an industry action plan addressing the reflection and portrayal of Canada's cultural diversity on television.

Public Notice 2001-88 further called for the formation of a task force comprised of industry and non-industry representatives, to guide this initiative. The Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television, formed in 2002 and comprised of five industry representatives and four non-industry representatives, addressed two key objectives set out in the industry action plan.

First, the Task Force would carry out a major research initiative to study the reflection and portrayal of cultural diversity on Canadian private television. Second, the Task Force would develop and recommend a set of Best Practices and Industry Initiatives for broadcaster use. Together, these would form the basis for advancing and measuring broadcaster progress on cultural diversity in the years ahead.

Research and Key Findings

The Task Force retained Solutions Research Group of Toronto and Johnston and Buchan LLP of Ottawa to carry out the research study. Five research modules were developed:

- Background Research, including reviews of previous content analyses.
- Review of Best Practices, 15 case studies of corporations recognized as leaders in cultural diversity.
- Fifty-four one-on-one interviews with 54 key stakeholders, including broadcasting, ethnocultural and Aboriginal organizations.
- Twenty focus groups, selected from six markets and representing 150 Canadians from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- An extensive, benchmark content analysis: 330 hours of Canadian programming from 72 English- and French-language services, plus the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network; 6,123 speaking roles from 462 programs were analyzed.

The result of the Task Force's research initiative is without question the most comprehensive research study on cultural diversity and the media ever undertaken, anywhere.

The qualitative research – i.e. interviews and focus groups – revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the status of cultural diversity on television. While interview subjects indicated some progress had been made, there was general recognition that significant advancement is required. Focus group participants provided strong opinion on several areas of concern, including persistent stereotyping, negative portrayal, underrepresentation of some groups, and a virtual absence of Aboriginal representation outside of the Aboriginal Peoples Television network.

The quantitative analysis of programming content substantiated many of these concerns, by providing a rich assessment of exactly how cultural diversity is reflected and portrayed on television.

In order to measure the actual presence of cultural diversity on television, population proportion measures determined by Statistics Canada from the 2001 Census were used as statistical benchmarks. For Canada excluding Quebec, the population proportion comprising ethnic, racial and Aboriginal diversity is 19.3 percent. For Quebec, the same population proportion is 7.9 percent.

Eleven programming categories – six in English and five in French – were analyzed by a team of coding experts from ethnoculturally diverse backgrounds. The analysis consisted of (i) tabulating the actual onscreen presence of cultural diversity and (ii) analyzing the roles played and/or attributes or qualities demonstrated on screen.

All six English-language categories measured fell below the 19.3 percent benchmark.

Two French-language categories were higher than the 7.9 percent benchmark: Drama and Children's Drama. Three fell below: News, Other Information and Other Entertainment.

The research found three critical gaps in presence:

- Very few experts/guests from culturally diverse backgrounds are used in English News;
- Very few on-screen roles such as anchor or reporter are filled by visible minorities on French-language News; and
- Visible minorities in English-language Drama fill few primary speaking roles.

The research also found two significant areas of underrepresentation, where onscreen presence of two groups is considerably less than their corresponding presence in the general population: Canadians of Asian and Southeast Asian descent and Aboriginal Peoples.

Best Practices and Industry Initiatives

Based on these research findings and the collective experience of its members, the Task Force developed and recommended a comprehensive set of Best Practices and Industry Initiatives guided by the following principles:

- The broadcasting industry must make a long-term commitment to advancing cultural diversity goals onscreen and behind the camera
- The Best Practices are flexible in their design, so they can be applied as appropriate for the market and operational realities of individual broadcasters.
- Best Practices have been developed so that their progress can be measured over time.
- All sectors of the industry – producers, directors, actors, funding agencies – must demonstrate long-term commitment to advancing diversity goals in order to effect real change within the system.

In order to situate the recommended Best Practices within the operations and market realities of the Canadian broadcasting system, the Task Force has organized its Best Practices into 10 areas:

1. Industry Commitment
2. Application and Measurement
3. Corporate Commitment and Accountability
4. Recruitment, Hiring, Retention
5. Internship, Mentoring and Scholarships
6. News and Information Programming
7. Programming – Acquired, Independent, and In-house Production
8. Community Connections
9. Internal Communications
10. External Communications

The Task Force also has recommended that the CRTC undertake another programming content analysis in three to four years time, for example during the 2006-07 television season, to ascertain the level of progress achieved.

The full report and research study can be found at:

<http://www.cab-acr.ca/english/social/diversity/default.shtm>