

# Waldorf Education: Diversity and Inclusiveness

## A Declaration of British Columbia Waldorf Schools and Institutions

British Columbia Waldorf Schools have, since their inception, espoused principles of respect for human rights and the diversity of humankind. Today, all British Columbia Waldorf schools continue to define diversity as a range of racial identifications, ancestries, nationalities, native languages, socioeconomic backgrounds, family structures, ages, belief systems, gender and sexual identities, abilities, appearances, occupations, and political affiliations. Enhancing our diversity is a journey of both moral and educational importance and a learning and growth experience for our whole community. Our schools and institutions are committed to using these principles to promote an environment of safety, acceptance and respect for all students.

British Columbia Waldorf schools have always operated on these principles and find themselves in full alignment with the recent *Stuttgart Declaration*, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the German Association of Waldorf Schools (Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen) in Stuttgart on October 28 2007. This declaration was made to unequivocally clarify the intents of Rudolf Steiner's pedagogical theories and work and to explicitly reject allegations that Waldorf schools in any way espouse racist or nationalistic views. An adapted translation of parts of the *Stuttgart Declaration* (as authorized by the *European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education -ECSWE*) reads as follows:

*Racist or discriminatory tendencies are not tolerated in Waldorf schools or Waldorf teacher training institutes. The Waldorf school movement explicitly rejects any attempt to misappropriate Waldorf pedagogy or Rudolf Steiner's work for racist or nationalistic purposes.*

*Waldorf schools have been working on the basis of these principles since the movement was founded in 1919. Institutions working out of Waldorf education are today engaged in all parts of the world, including areas of social tension in Europe, Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Middle East.*

*Waldorf schools pursue their pedagogical tasks out of the spirit of human rights, thereby contributing to building a society founded upon mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation between all human beings.*

*Waldorf schools do not select, stratify or discriminate amongst their pupils, but consider all human beings to be free and equal in dignity and rights, independent of ethnicity, national or social origin, gender, language, religion, and political or other convictions.*

*Anthroposophy, upon which Waldorf education is founded, stands firmly against all forms of racism and nationalism.*

Waldorf schools recognize that the richness inherent in a school community is built upon the synergy between both curriculum and students studying that curriculum. To this end, Waldorf schools not only actively build school communities that are reflective of the larger community in which we are located, but also intentionally promote the synergistic interaction between the elements of the community.

Honouring the multiple perspectives that exist in our increasingly diverse communities, British Columbian Waldorf schools heed the call for ongoing conversation in education and collectively we find many ways to facilitate community-based participation in the co-construction of the educational experience in our schools; parent-school partnerships are foundational to our schools. The BC Waldorf schools have developed their curriculum to intentionally embrace and immerse students in contemporary and ancient world cultures across the globe. Through this curriculum, BC Waldorf schools continue to meet the British Columbia Ministry of Education curricular outcomes while at the same time enriching the students' educational experience and fostering a broader understanding, appreciation, and respect for the diverse human endeavour that we are all part of.

Our British Columbia Waldorf schools also participate in local service learning initiatives as part of our broad commitment to social justice. Each year, many Waldorf high school students go on exchange programs to other countries and –in turn- our schools welcome international students and the further opportunities to enrich our school communities and mutual growth and understanding.

British Columbia Waldorf schools, true to the fundamental spirit of Rudolf Steiner's philosophy, are strongly committed to these principles and objectives in bringing a quality educational program option that fundamentally embraces cultural and societal diversity and inclusiveness.