



Fathers in a New Land

A workshop from the My Dad Matters toolkit

Purpose of the Workshop

Coming to Canada from another country brings many changes. These changes are even more evident and impactful when there are children involved. Fathers can learn about the expectations around parenting in Canada and what it has meant for them to come to this country. This workshop will provide fathers with ideas to try with their children. The goal is to support these men as they work at having a strong bond with their children that will allow them to be a positive influence.

Facilitator tips:

Write legibly and clearly on flip charts or white boards.

Read [Growing up in a New Land](#).

Provide copies of or a link to [Growing Up in a New Land for Parents](#).

The timer in the margin indicates approximately how much time should be spent at each section of the workshop.



Welcome and Introductions

- **Facilitator introduction:** Let them know who you are, what your interest is in facilitating this discussion, and what your role is in the group.
- **Overview** of the purpose of the workshop.
- Have the dads **share** their name, home country, ages of children, one thing they like about Canada.

Comparing Your Home Country to Canada



Goal:

To share the differences and similarities in parenting from different countries.

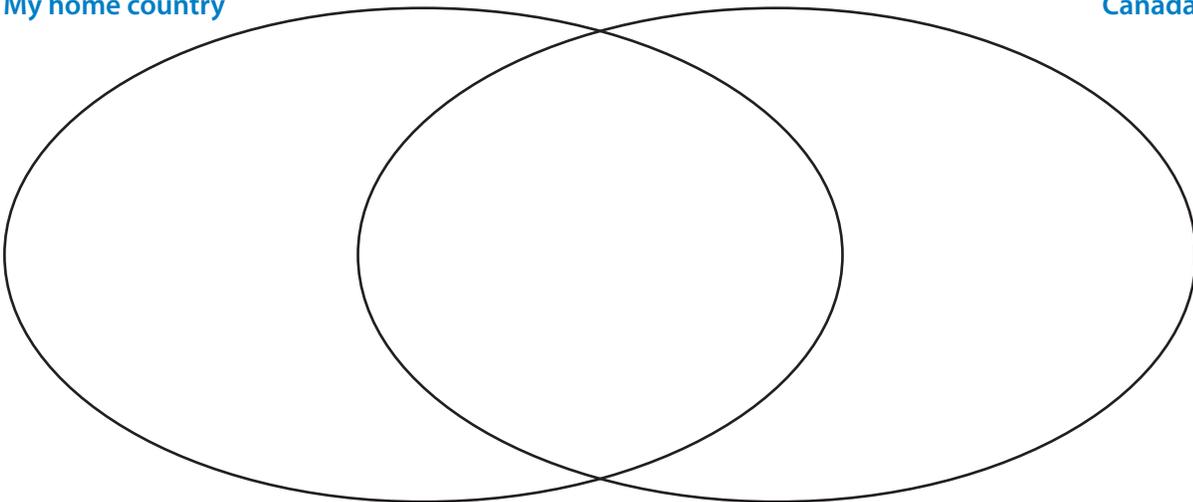
Using a Venn Diagram, ask the group what is unique about parenting in their home country and Canada and what is the same about parenting in both countries.

Steps:

- **Draw** a Venn Diagram (see below) with two intersecting circles on a board or flip chart. You will want to make it big enough to write in.
- Over the left circle **write**: My home country
- Over the right circle **write**: Canada
- **Ask** fathers to share what is unique about parenting to their country and culture. **Write** these in the left circle.
- **Ask** the fathers what is unique about parenting in Canada. **Write** these in the right circle.
- **Ask** the fathers what is similar between the two countries. **Write** these in the overlapping section between the circles.
- **Discuss**: **Ask** the fathers what stands out for them about the similarities and differences in parenting.
 - Were there any surprises?
 - Did they learn anything?

My home country

Canada





Managing Change

Goal:

To give fathers opportunity to have ideas of how to manage the changes that have happened.

Coming to Canada has brought much change to families. Making changes in our lives will unusually change us. Some things that change will be good and helpful. Some things that change will have been more difficult. Fathers can take some time to reflect on the expectations they had and how they have been managing the transition for their family. Changes will be noticed in their relationship with mom and their children, the support or opportunities they find in Canada, and how they are dealing with the change within themselves (emotions, etc.).

What has changed since you have come to Canada?

- **Ask** the fathers to share some things that they notice have changed since coming to Canada.
 - Look for changes in their relationship with their wives/partners, their relationship with their children, and changes within themselves (emotions, reactions to things, etc.)
 - Write their ideas on a flip chart or white board.
- **Ask** the fathers for their ideas about what has helped them manage the change.
- **Share** some ways to manage change.
Refer to the *Managing Change* handout (see page 9).

Canadian Parenting Practices



Goal:

For fathers to understand the expectations of parenting practice in Canada.

There are expectations about how to parent that are unique to Canada. This section touches on some of these and allow fathers to consider how to apply them to their own parenting. Each expectation has a goal in mind: a way to raise a healthy child.

Independence

Becoming independent encourages children to try new things and gain confidence in what they are able to do. It also helps prepare them for daycare and school.

- **Ask** fathers what they think of when they hear the word: *independence*.
- **Record** their thoughts on a flip chart or white board.
- **Ask** the fathers for ways children can learn to be independent.
- **Write** these down on a flip chart or white board.
- **Offer** other ideas, if needed, such as:
 - Go to the bathroom with little or no help
 - Wash hands
 - Tell others their full name
 - Cross the street safely with an adult
 - Eat by themselves
 - Be able to share and take turns
 - Tell others about things they have done
 - Dress themselves

Remind fathers that independence grows as their child develops. It is important to know what your child is able to do and not to do depending on age and abilities. For example, a two year old will likely not be able to tie his shoe laces, whereas a five year old can. You can refer parents to nlds.ca or welcomehere.ca for more information on child development.

Socialization

Children learn to relate by being with other people. This includes people in their family, like you, their mom, siblings, grandparents, etc. It also includes neighbours, daycare or school friends, teachers, and other adults.

- **Ask** fathers for ways their children can learn to relate with other people.
- **Offer** some suggestions that include getting along with other children and getting along with adults.
 - Learning to share
 - Spending time with other children
 - Going places with adults (shopping, visiting, to the park, etc.)

Discussion with children

Children learn a lot through the ways their fathers speak with them. The best learning happens when fathers are sharing their experiences, talking about what is happening around them, and taking time to listen to what their children are saying. This exercise will help fathers gain some ideas about the kinds of things they can be talking to their children about.

- **Give** each father a copy of the *Let's Talk* handout (see page 10). You can copy the handout onto the flip chart or white board, too.
- **Ask** fathers for examples of the kinds of things they can talk to their children about in each scenario.
- **Fill in** your own ideas to ensure fathers have enough good ideas.

Positive discipline

There are many different views on discipline around the world. Fathers can learn about the expectations of positive discipline in Canada.

Use the following to have a discussion about discipline.

- **Draw** two columns on a flip chart or white board.
- **Label** one side “Positive Discipline” and the other “Punishment”.
- **Tell** the fathers they are going to discuss the difference between Positive Discipline and Punishment.
- **Ask** them if they can think of how these are different.
- **Print** the *Positive Discipline* cards (see page 11) and cut them out. They can be glued onto 3x5 cards if you wish.
- **Place** them on the table up side down.
- Have the fathers each **pick up** a sheet.
- Have them **identify** which column their sheet will go under. Provide masking tape or stick-tack and ask them to place their card in the appropriate column.
- **Be prepared to discuss** these as the fathers consider where they go. Emphasize that positive discipline is to teach children to make good choices in a respectful, caring way.

Facilitator note:

Traditional Parenting Practices:

There are things in the traditional parenting practices that fathers will want to keep. As well, there are practices within Canada that they need to be aware of. Fathers often comment on how in Canada there is too much choice for the kids, too much freedom and options outside the home. The children are able to make decisions and do things that would never be an option in their home country or weren't done until adulthood. The issue is independence from the family. Depending on the culture, this may look different.



What a Father Can Do

Goal:

To give fathers some ideas of how they can be involved with their children.

Often fathers are unclear about their roles as a parent in Canada.

- **Provide** a copy of *What a Father Can Do* (see page 12) to each father.
- **Review** the five areas with examples.
- If time permits, **ask** them for ideas of how they can do these things.

- **Care/Nurture:** Provide what is necessary for your child to grow and be healthy.

- **Supervision/Protection:** Be aware of where they are, what they are doing, who they are with. With young children that means staying in the same room with them and keeping them in eyesight. With older children (8 and up) it means knowing where they are, what time they should be home from school, who their friends are, etc.

- **Structure/Limits:** Set clear limits with children. Enforce them in gentle, loving ways that help a child learn to make good choices. These limits will change as your child gets older and more independent.

- **Discipline/Respect:** Enforce limits in gentle and caring ways. Use consequences that make sense to the child and encourage them to make a different choice next time. Be respectful, but not to the point of always giving in.

- **Educational Participation:** Take a caring interest in your child's academic life. Help them with homework, read to them daily, know and talk with their teacher, volunteer at the school.



Wrap up

- **Hand out** the *What I Can Change* worksheet (see page 13) to each father.
- **Ask** them what they have learned from this workshop that they would like to do something about. Maybe they learned something, were reminded about something, or have a new question they would like to get answered.
- **Thank** the fathers for coming to the group and provide community resources for them that can help them with a variety of issues (parenting, housing, school, employment, etc.).

Managing Change

Coming to a new land brings many changes. Here are some things that can help with adjusting to new things:

- **Be aware of the losses that come with the change.** For example, leaving your home country can mean losing position in a community, a home, family support, and more. Things are not the same as the used to be.
- **Accept that change touches a lot of things,** including our relationships, our emotions, and how we manage day to day activities.
- **Keep focused on the reason for the change.** Remind yourself why you made this decision. This is a new opportunity that you can make the most of.
- **Keep a check on reality.** What truth can you tell yourself (this will pass, we will get through this, we can get help)?
- **Talk about the change and how it is affecting you.** Talk with your wife/partner or find a trusted friend, support worker.
- **Look after yourself.** Eat right, exercise and get a good amount of sleep.
- **Expect to feel different:** depression, anxiety, confusion, joy. If it seems like your emotions are confusing or out of control, talk to a doctor or social worker.
- **Look for ways you can grow and change yourself.** What can you learn about yourself?
- **Take your time.** Give you and your family some time to adjust.

Let's Talk

Talking to children during regular routines is a helpful way for them to learn. Think of some things you can talk about during these routines.

ROUTINE	WHAT YOU CAN TALK ABOUT
When doing housework	Say what you are doing. "I am sweeping the floor". <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
When shopping for groceries	Read the grocery list out loud. <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
When preparing and eating a meal	Talk about what you will make for dinner. <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
When doing a bedtime routine	Count out loud while your child is brushing teeth. <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Positive Discipline Cards

Giving choices	Having clear limits	Giving clear directions
Being clear about consequences	Using non-violent ways	Letting a child learn to solve problems
Shaming	Yelling	Hitting
Slapping	Belittling	Comparing
Insulting	Isolating	Natural Consequences

What a Father Can Do

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- **Supervision/Protection:** Be aware of where they are, what they are doing, who they are with. With young children that means staying in the same room with them and keeping them in eyesight. With older children (8 and up) it means knowing where they are, what time they should be home from school, who their friends are, etc.
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Resources

Best Start Resource Centre (2010).

Growing up in a new land: Strategies for service providers working with newcomers.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Best Start Resource Centre (2013).

Growing up in a new land: A guide for newcomer parents.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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