



Tips to Make Intercultural Team Projects Work

**Camosun College
Multilingual Support Services**

Fall 2023

Territorial Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge that I am an uninvited settler on the traditional unceded lands of the lək'wəŋən and ƵSÁNEĆ peoples. I am committed to learning more about and from these beautiful territories and their stewards, the colonial history impacting them, and to continuing to decolonize my practice as an English language instructor.



Beach in Esquimalt territory

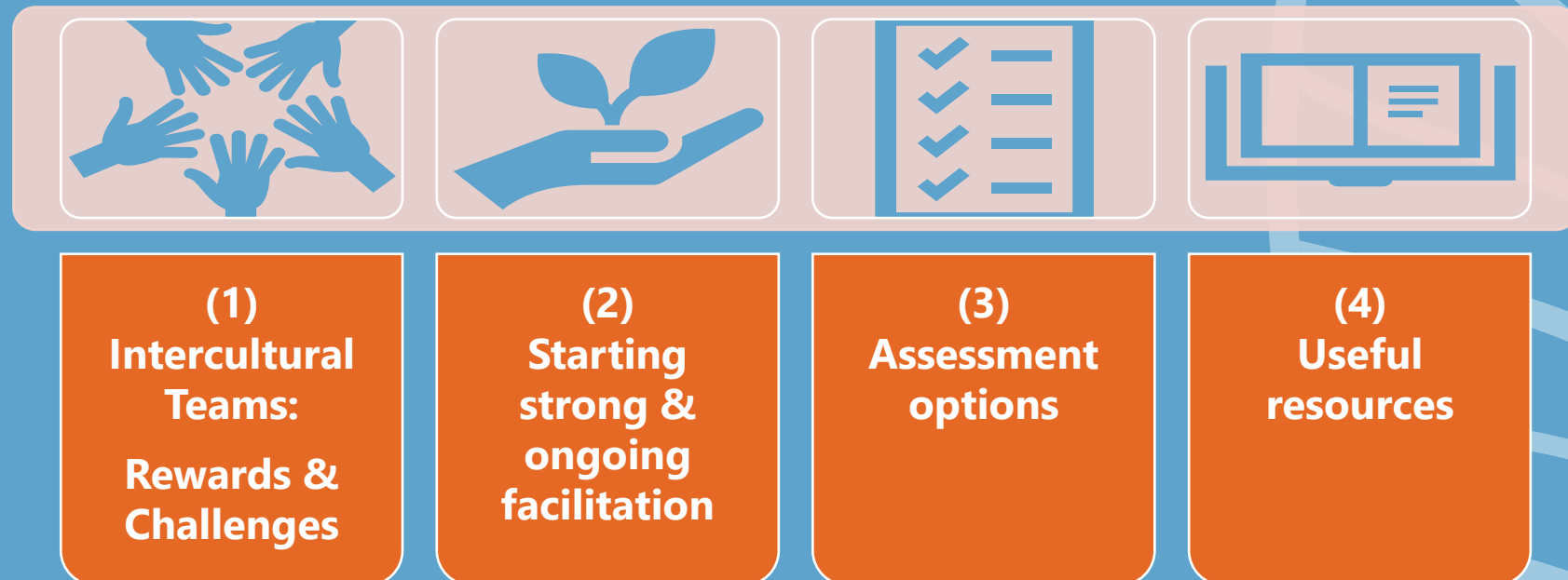
Introduction

Intercultural team projects can help students develop both teamwork and intercultural skills. Achieving these goals requires careful planning and ongoing facilitation.

Included

- Tips from Camosun business faculty and other research
- Participants' ideas and questions
- Links to resources

Contents



Introductions

Your interest in the
topic

An example of a
team project in
your course
(program)

A question you
have about
(intercultural) team
projects



Some Principles

Every group is diverse –
tips for intercultural
teams are relevant to all.

(Shapiro et al., 2014)

Diversity



Intercultural teams
increase challenge but
also potential for growth
and learning.

(McAlister & Perron, 2019)

Potential



Be mindful of cultural
influences but see the
person first.

(Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009)

Individual



Intercultural Teams

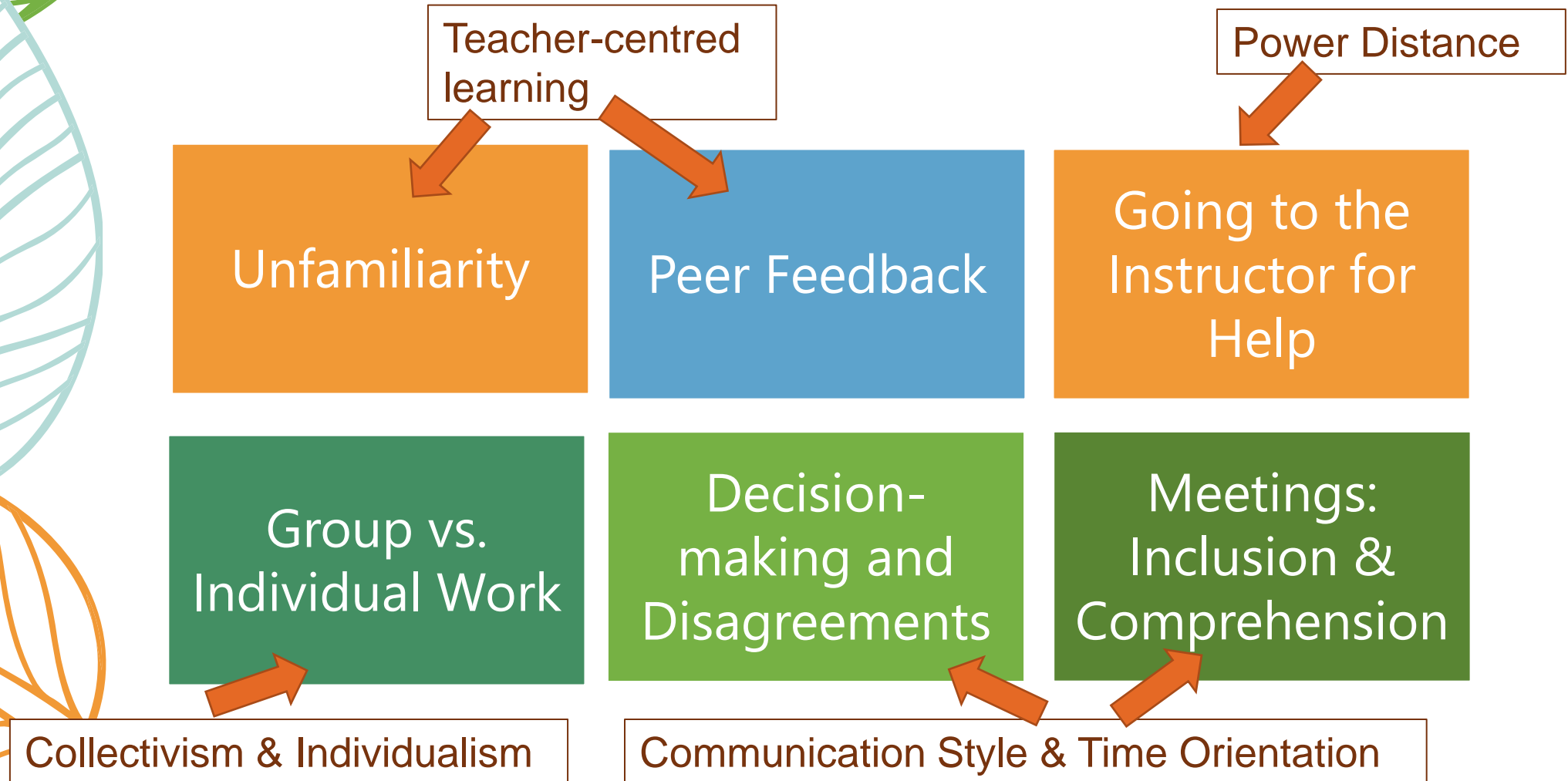
Intercultural competence is a blend of cultural knowledge, facilitative attitudes, and communication skills (Byram et al., 2001).

What can Intercultural Competence look like in student teams?

- Effectively “mediating between perspectives” (Byram et al., 2001, p. 5)
- Attitudinal: ambiguity tolerance, empathy, flexibility, respect for difference, willingness to learn (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009)
- Communication: negotiating meanings, creating shared understandings, and repairing misunderstandings (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005)

Intercultural Teams

Where Might Culture Show Itself in Team Projects?





Intercultural Teams: Rewards & Challenges

Rewards

- Tap into diverse perspectives
- Avoid groupthink
- Build intercultural competency alongside teamwork skills


Challenges

- Deal with divergent values & communication styles
 - Entrench biases and stereotypes
- Manage different learning expectations
 - Teacher-focused vs autonomous
- Balance process and product focus



Example Activity: Intercultural goal setting

Intercultural Teamwork Skills	Self-Evaluation (1 = weak; 5 = strong)					SMART Goal(s) for that skill (<u>S</u> pecific, <u>M</u> easurable, <u>A</u> chievable, <u>R</u> elevant, <u>T</u> imely)
Understand cultural dimensions and be open to learning more about cultures of members.	1	2	3	4	5	
Regularly get to know other members better; contribute to open, trusting 'climate.'	1	2	3	4	5	
Recognize my preferences, strengths & areas to improve related to group work.	1	2	3	4	5	
Cooperate in establishing group rules and commit to following and updating them.	1	2	3	4	5	
Monitor and adapt my communication for clarity; listen actively; ensure comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	
Give and welcome feedback that is positive, specific, and useful.	1	2	3	4	5	
Bring up problems when I see them; discuss respectfully; work toward solutions.	1	2	3	4	5	



Part 2 – Starting Strong

Question to chew on:

For your course (program), what criteria are important when forming teams?



Starting Strong

Introducing project

- Is team project necessary? If so, incorporate options (Centre for Accessible Learning, n.d.)
- Justify and promote team project and intercultural aspect

Topics

- Include cultural options and/or design so all members' input is required

Group formation

- Identify group needs
 - Availability, diverse abilities, intercultural (multiple EAL learners in a group) (Oakley et al., 2004).
- Start drafting groups early
- 3-5 members
- Instructor-selected but with student input: surveys, mixers, application letter
- Consider "language bridge" (i.e., stronger/weaker same-language speakers in same group)



Starting Strong

Clear instructions


- Project goals, components, timing
- Assessment: weighting, individual/team and process/product
- D2L organization including templates, rubrics, examples

Team building

- Time (initial low-stakes assignments)
- Ice-breakers, strengths, values (personality surveys)
- Roles (e.g., Leader, Mediator, Organizer, Checker)

Team contract

- Key commitments, communication methods, decision making, upcoming meetings, conflict procedures



Ideas or questions about starting strong?

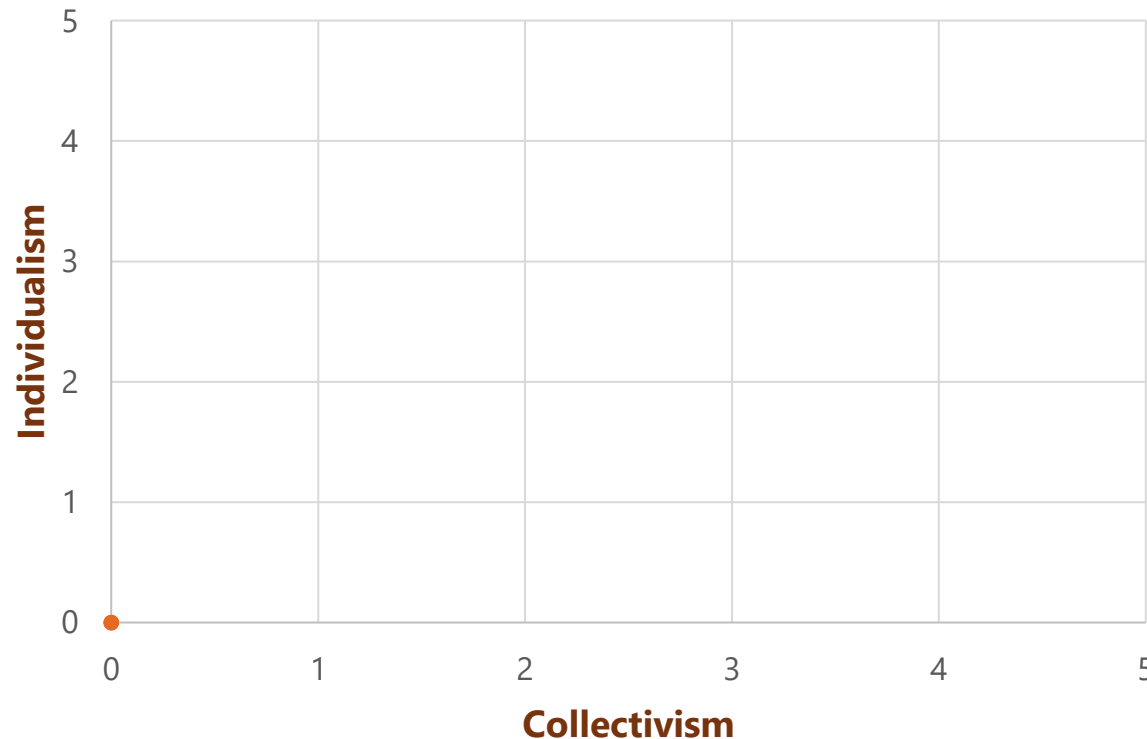
Example Activity: Cultural Dimensions (Murdoch-Kitt et al., 2020)

(A)

Goal is to learn range of members' positions for cultural dimensions

- Explain relevant dimensions; read profiles of both sides
- Ask members to position themselves for each dimension

(B)



Collectivism

Focuses on group benefits and relationships. Prefers shared work.

Individualism

Prioritizes benefit for me; focuses on end goal; prefers to work on parts separately.

Part 3 – Facilitating Ongoing Work

Question to chew on:

As instructor, when do you step in to mediate group conflicts?





Facilitating Ongoing Work

Develop cohesion with preliminary assignments

- Mid-project reflection and peer evaluations
 - Before high-stakes work begins
- Revisit contract and roles
 - Re-form teams (Oakley, 2004)

Allocate class time

- Dynamics are visible
- Structured check-ins (but adaptive support: teams' "attributes, processes and context" are always shifting. (Chao & Parady, 2017, para. 14)
- Inter-group updates (e.g., similar roles)

Provide structure for meetings

- Teach effective communication for meetings
 - Time to prepare/speak, include all, check understanding
- Agenda & minutes templates → submit completed docs to instructor
- Task management plan



Facilitating Ongoing Work

Explain effective peer feedback (Multilingual Support Services, 2023)

- Check before giving feedback
- Define positively (improve not criticize)
- Include positive (keep) and negative (change)
- Guidelines: monitor language, be specific, goal focused

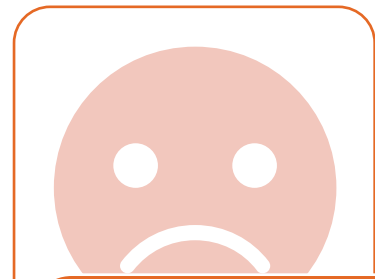
Dealing with problem members

- Encourage sharing concerns with instructor
 - Remind of team contract
- Help groups connect
- Conflict resolution before removing
 - First group led → instructor-mediated
 - Removing member not always punitive; strong members may prefer leaving
 - Back-up plan?

Ideas or
questions
about ongoing
work?

Example Conflict-resolution Process

(Guffey et al., 2022)



Postpone Judgment

- Manage your emotions
- Don't assume negative intent



Get Information

- Take time to understand member's position
- Focus on issue, not person



Focus on Solutions

- Don't stick on issue
- Move forward to finding solutions

Part 3 - Assessment

Question to chew on:

Think of a team project. What weighting feels appropriate for the process vs the product? And for individual vs whole-group contributions?



Assessment

Transparency

- Clear expectations
- Make rubrics, templates available (sample assignments?)

Ease into project

- Initial low-stakes assignments

Balance group/individual contributions

- Include individual assignments
 - Example: research summary, information gap
- Include process assignments (mid-project & final)
 - Reflection (Huang, 2018)
 - Self/peer evaluation(s)
- Capture individuals' contributions
 - Separate group/individual grades
 - Weight items (80/20? 50/50?)
- Mark individuals' sections of group submission (last resort)



Ideas or questions
about assessment?

Part 4 – Materials & Using D2L

Question to chew on:

For a complex project with multiple parts, how would you use D2L to organize instructions and materials?





Materials & Using D2L

D2L

- Private Groups & Discussions forum
- Permanent Zoom rooms (Record meetings)

Start-up

- Assignment rubrics, templates, and examples
- Role-focused surveys
 - [Fisher's personality survey](#) (Anatomy, 2023)
 - [Five-minute personality survey](#) (Smalley & Trent, 1999)
 - [123 Test – Team-building surveys](#) (123 Test Team, 2023)
- [Teamwork skills survey](#) (Cumming et al., 2014)
- Icebreakers: Interview, valued objects, find things in common
 - [Session Lab Blog – 50+ icebreaker ideas](#)
- Contract ([at Camosun's Groupwork LibGuide](#))



Materials

Ongoing Support

- [Self/peer evaluations](#) (Camosun Groupwork LibGuide)
- Templates for meeting agenda and minutes
- Self and team reflection
 - Examples from [Carnegie Mellon](#) and Oakley et al. (2014)

Assessment

- Rubrics
 - [Camosun Groupwork LibGuide](#)
 - [Range of Teamwork rubrics](#) (Carnegie Mellon University, 2023)

Question or other ideas for materials?

Conclusion

Bringing together intercultural team project strategies from Camosun faculty and wider research.

Many thanks to School of Business faculty experts:

Glen Allen, Michelle Clement, Brenda Jones, Susan Tinker

Intercultural Teams:

- Clarify and scaffold
- Hot spots: unfamiliarity, group/individual focus, communication, feedback, going to instructor

Starting Strong

- Identify composition essentials
- Justify and give clear expectations
- Give time for team building
- Use contracts

Facilitating Ongoing Work

- Use class time
- Structure check-ins and team meetings
- Plan reflection and reset before high-stakes components

Assessment

- Design cultural topic and/or range of contributions
- Balance process and product
- Balance individual/group components

Materials & D2L

- Simplify instructions & organization
- Materials: contract, role & teamwork surveys, templates, samples, rubrics

Other Resources

[Camosun Assessment LibGuide](#)

- Sample materials: Team-building outcomes (4 "C"s); Fisher personality survey (formation/roles); team contract; assessment breakdown (process/product; group/individual); self/peer assessment

[Camosun Student Learning Success Guides - Groupwork](#)

[Camosun e-Learning D2L Tutorials & Workshops](#)

- Improve your D2L know-how

[MSS self-study workshops for students](#)

- "Group Discussion Skills" and "Intercultural Groupwork"

[My PBL Works](#)

- Resources for Projects

[Groupwork Skills Questionnaire](#)

- 10 items; validated; free for instructors to use



Thanks for joining!

Ways the **Multilingual Support Services (MSS)** team can help with team projects:

- Coming soon: Intercultural Team Projects checklist
- Language clarity review of team project instructions and other materials
- In-class Intercultural Teamwork workshop
- Consultation to discuss ways to support EAL students

Visit our website for more information:

camosunmss.opened.ca



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