

The Family Instructors' Guide

This session gives you and the learners a chance to become acquainted by sharing a few details about yourselves and your families. You will talk about different family groups and how they may differ from the traditional stereotype of 'family'. You may need more than one 2-hour session to complete everything here, so if you have only two hours, choose activities to suit your group.

Central Idea

Families come in all shapes, sizes and structures, each with its own traditions and culture.

Warm-up

Welcome the group and tell them about the program. If the sessions are to include food, this would be a good time to discuss menus. Ask participants to introduce themselves around the circle. You go first to start it off. Everyone should say:

- Their first name
- How many children they help to raise
- What they like to do for relaxation when (if!) they ever have a free afternoon
- A topic they would like to learn more about

Call It a Clan

Read the first quote—**Call It a Clan**—then post it on the flip chart and give the group a moment to read it. Invite learners to respond to this idea. Why do we need a family? What are the advantages of family? What responsibilities or problems do families bring? Why does the writer use other words like *clan*, *network* or *tribe*? For this discussion, you be the leader so that you can model good facilitation skills. For example:

- Ask questions to encourage responses.
- Listen attentively to each speaker and respond with comments like, "That's a good point." "Who else agrees with this?"
- Give everyone a chance to speak. Move diplomatically to a new speaker if one person begins to dominate.
- Point out connections between what different people are saying.
- Keep a 'parking lot' chart for ideas that may be off topic but worth looking back at later.

One Kind of Family

Show the picture **One Kind of Family**. Explain that although many families do have one father, one mother and two children, there are also many family units that have a different structure. Ask them to think of several different examples of family structures. Ask for two volunteers—one to lead the discussion and one to write the group's ideas on the flip chart. You can take part by throwing in ideas if needed (single parent and children, grandparents and children, blended families, same-sex families, foster families). It is important at this point to make sure that no one gets the impression that one kind of family is 'better' than another.

Put this question to the group, "What does the word 'family' mean? What emotion do you associate with this word?" Ask everyone to write their answer on rough paper and save it for the writing activity at the end of the class.

Canadian Families 1981 and 2001

The pie charts in the handout **Canadian Families 1981 and 2001** contain data from Statistics Canada. Give out the sheets and explain that pie charts are used to compare *how much* or *how many*. In this case we are comparing how many Canadians there are in each type of family group. Look first at the chart for 1981 and ask participants to think of it as a pie cut into slices of different sizes. The whole pie represents all families; each slice represents a particular kind of family. Ask which group is the largest; which is the smallest. Now turn to the chart for 2001 and ask the group to look for what has changed on the chart. Which group is now larger? Which is now smaller? Have any remained the same? After the group has had time to discuss their findings, write this sentence on the flip chart and ask for suggestions on how it could be completed:

*In Canadian families, there is a trend toward more . . .
and fewer . . .*

The Family Network

Give out the worksheet **The Family Network**. Explain that this is a kind of map used to show the members of a family unit and other people the family might also rely on, such as extended family, friends, neighbours, teachers or health professionals. Everyone will have a chance to describe their own family units. However, for some people this may cause anxiety or embarrassment. Give them a choice. If they prefer, they could work with someone else and help them with their map. When they are finished, encourage learners to show their maps and talk a bit about their own family units, if they feel comfortable doing so.

Family Festivals

If your group is multicultural, acknowledge this by asking people to share a few details about family life in their culture. Ask them to give an example of something about families in their culture that they think is very different from families in other cultures and an example of something that is very similar. If your group is not multicultural, remind them of the many cultural groups that make up the population of Canada—Aboriginal, French, English, as well as cultures that have arrived more recently from all over the world.

Give out the worksheet **Family Festivals** and ask participants to choose a festival they know little or nothing about. The choices are:

Pow-wows	Diwali	Kwanzaa
Eid al-fitr	Christmas	Hannakuh
Chinese New Year		

Direct them to the web site on the worksheet and give as much help as is needed to navigate the site. Once there, participants should find out some details about their chosen festival to complete their worksheets. When the group is back together, ask people to share a few interesting details they've learned.

If the Family Were a Boat

Read the quote **If the Family Were a Boat**, then post it on the flip chart. If necessary, explain the technique that the writer is using—making an analogy, or comparing the concept of 'family' to something else familiar. This helps us to focus on a particular aspect of the topic, and it stimulates us to think in creative ways. Encourage the group to discuss the quote by asking, "Why do you think the writer said that?" or "In what other ways do you think a family is like a game of baseball?"

The worksheet **If the Family Were a Boat** is suitable for participants with strong writing skills and for those who enjoy creative writing. They could do it in class or take it home and share their writing in the next session.

Wrap-up

Conclude the session by giving out small slips of paper, or sticky notes, and asking everyone to write a completion for this sentence:

Families are _____

They can write on as many slips of paper as they would like to. Their

completions could be one word (*caring*) or many (*people you turn to when you need a safe place to be*). They could be straightforward (*great*) or creative (*like a box of chocolates; you never know . . .*).

If writing is difficult for some, group people in pairs or threesomes and have one person be the scribe.

When everyone has had enough time to express their ideas, gather all the papers and stick them on a piece of flip chart paper to make a poster. Give it a title and display it somewhere in the room.

Holidays Around the World

Give out copies of the booklet **Holidays Around the World** for participants to take home and share with their children.