

Keith Dow, Manager of Organizational and Spiritual Life
Jamie MacRae, Talent Acquisition Manager (Saskatchewan)

The late community advocate Judith Snow wrote that everybody has at least two gifts that they bring to any human interaction. No matter who you are or what you can do, no matter what your ability or background, you bring the gifts of *presence* and *difference* to each interaction in our world. At Karis, we believe that *you* are a gift to our community. And in the Christian faith tradition, you are one of the ways God “graces” to the world!

I (Keith) will never forget travelling to Ethiopia in 2016 and meeting our partners and people who use our services there. I had the unique privilege of experiencing Ethiopian hospitality through a coffee ceremony. This ceremony is an important cultural ritual, rich in symbolism, that is passed down from generation to generation. There is nothing “instant” about the coffee, and this investment of time is part of what makes the experience beautiful. The gifts of presence and difference that we shared at that time transcended cultural and language barriers. I am not sure I have ever experienced hospitality as deep and rich as I did in Ethiopia, and the ceremony is an expression and element of that hospitality. It was much different than grabbing a cup of coffee at Tim’s!

Embracing respectful diversity – communities that are more “cultural mosaic” than “melting pot” – is more Canadian than Tim Hortons. That’s why we celebrate [#BlackHistoryMonth](#) every February. People who use our services at the Toronto Community Participation Supports experienced their own Ethiopian coffee ceremony!



Left: The coffee ceremony Keith experienced in Ethiopia, February 2016

Right: Karis Toronto enjoys a coffee ceremony, February 2025

This year, Karis Disability Services was nominated for Best Partner at the Saskatoon Open Door Society's (SODS) annual Diversity Awards, an organization that supports newcomers to Canada. "We're better when we have diversity. We make better teams, we can see things that we normally wouldn't see from our point of view, and it's what we stand for: communities where everybody belongs," said Jamie Macrae, a talent acquisition manager from Karis. When I asked Jamie to expand on her recruitment philosophy, she emphasized that our commitment to diverse hiring arises from our belief that “all people are created in the image

of God and are loved and valued equally.” She went on to share what that looks like in her role:

We are a stronger organization when we are made up of diverse individuals. As a recruitment team in Saskatchewan, we focus our efforts on growing our partnerships with organizations that support diverse and marginalized individuals. We offer our time to provide sessions on resume building and the sharing of information to prepare those seeking a job in the disability service sector. Providing these engagement sessions better equips individuals for success in our hiring practices and helps to increase our talent pool.

Posting our vacancies with diverse organizations helps us to attract under-represented candidate pools and create a more diverse workforce. In turn, this brings a wider range of perspectives, experiences, ideas, and creativity to our services and supports!

Whether it’s in diversifying our workforce or supporting someone who uses our services to explore and embrace their ethnic or cultural heritage in new ways, appreciating the gift of *difference* is an important way that we “celebrate every journey.”



Making the Connection

If you feel comfortable speaking to it, what are some of the values of your cultural heritage? What are some of the ways these values make a positive difference in our communities?

What is a unique cultural event from *another* culture that you have been a part of? What did you find meaningful or impactful about it? Do you support people who might enjoy being a part of unique cultural events and activities?