

Review – by Will Postma – Vice President of Programs, Save the Children, Canada

Build Your Neighbour is a short book, a fairly quick read. But its message is deep and the reason for the author, Chris Pullenayegem, to share this with Canadians is critical. In Canada, we are seeing increasing cultural diversity around us. What do we make of it all? Does it matter? Isn't it just too strange, complex and difficult to understand?

Far from just accepting a status quo acceptance of all of the cultures around us or, worse, to see others as strangers with odd customs, Chris encourages the reader to engage holistically, to understand the layers of challenges, fears and emotions that new Canadians experience, to build and cross bridges of understanding and dialogue. By doing so, and making use of the resources that Chris shares with us in Build Your Neighbour, we are enriched, inspired, mutually transformed.

Chris's Christian faith is evident in the sensitive recounting of real life contemporary stories, women and men from a variety of cultures, countries and religious contexts who have to navigate legal procedures, educational systems, family pressures, harmful traditional practices from where they have left and sometimes fled so as to escape persecution and threats to their lives. On top of that are prejudices, stereotypes and myths about cultural difference that persist in their new homeland, Canada.

In Build Your Neighbour, Chris makes it easy for the reader to understand the rich diversity of cultural expressions. Even more importantly, Chris makes it abundantly clear that the Church needs to respond, reach out and build a much broader, welcoming and shared sense of community – and ever growing and needed appreciation across cultures.