

## Activity 2.01 Elephant and the six elders in the mist (The Arts)

### Module: 2. Intercultural Dialogue

Duration: 10 Minutes

#### Social Development Themes: Arts

#### Summary

The story introduces the idea that all of us have a piece of the puzzle and there is value in the many different ways we view the world. This activity could be adapted by acting it out – six different people playing the parts of the six elders. Or, the group could have a minute to put as many items in the middle of the space as possible and sit back down in a circle. The group could then take it in turns to say what they see in the space.

#### Learning Outcomes:

Value different perspectives

#### Approach:

1. Share the following story with the group.

Once upon a time, there lived six wise elders who spent their lives travelling through the land, far and wide. One very foggy day they heard that an elephant had entered a village close to where they were staying. They had no idea what an elephant was and, although they had heard of this fantastic creature, they decided to go and find out more about this animal. When they came across the elephant they all touched the elephant to explore it.

“The elephant is a pillar”, said the first elder, who touched its leg.

“Oh, no! It is like a rope”, said the second elder the third man, who touched the trunk of the elephant.

“It is like a big hand fan” said the fourth elder, who touched the ear of the elephant.

“It is like a huge wall”, said the fifth elder, who touched the belly of the elephant.

“It is like a solid pipe”, said the sixth elder, who touched the tusk of the elephant.

They argued about what the elephant was like and every one of them insisted that he was right, each one shouting louder convinced that their perspective was the right one.



#### Alternate Approach

1. The elephant story can come to life through experience.
2. Place an object in the centre of the room and get a number of blindfolded participants to feel the object and guess what it is.
3. Do not say anything about communicating with one another during the task.
4. This could be repeated so that everyone has a chance to take part.

## Debrief

- Begin by asking the group about the story:
  - Who was right? (Everyone? No one?)
  - Who was telling the truth?
  - What is going on in this story?
- After allowing the group to share answers and thoughts, introduce the concept of perspectives if it has not arisen. Draw out the fact that each elder had his own perspective.
- Continue the discussion by asking, 'How could they better understand what an elephant is?'
- Explore the value of different perspectives and how they might be revealed – by sharing knowledge and experience and asking questions of others. How that is done effectively is the subject of this module.
- Finally, ask: 'What else could the elephant represent?' Examples might be our community, an issue, or even me.