

## Background Information on Cultures and Traditions



**Ricardo is 10 months old and is a member of the African-Caribbean community.**

The African-Caribbean community is primarily of African ancestry, hence the term African-Caribbean. Religion plays an important part in the lives of some African-Caribbean families. A large proportion is Christian (mainly Protestant) although a small proportion is Muslim. There are approximately 5,000 members of the community living in Northern Ireland.

African-Caribbean culture is very expressive, tropical and perhaps even carnival-like. There is a great emphasis on food, music, colours and festivals with most of these features rooted in African tradition and religions. It is a culture and tradition which holds the elderly in great esteem, and their wisdom is almost prophetic, handed down through stories, hymns, poems, proverbs, riddles and even art. The family is at the heart of the community and religion is based around the relationships formed between husband and wife, parents and children, siblings and so forth.

African-Caribbean music plays a big part in today's music culture and has a strong following among the UK population. In summary the community is colourful and vibrant, enjoying life and music, and offering inspiration to all.



**Cristal is 9 months old and is a member of the Chinese community.**

Chinese people have been living in Northern Ireland since the 1960s and originally most of them came from Hong Kong. There are approximately 8,000 Chinese people living in Northern Ireland today and Chinese children are likely to be third or fourth generation.

80-90% of Chinese people living in Northern Ireland speak Cantonese. The remainder speak Mandarin. Cristal will be raised to learn and speak Cantonese and English similar to her parents. The majority of the adult community work in the catering industry within their own family businesses. Others have come to study and to share their expertise in employment within the IT field. The Chinese do not have an institutional

religion. Religion is more a personal thing. A small proportion of the Chinese community in Northern Ireland are Christians; others may be influenced by Taoism (ancestor worship) or Buddhism, although very few Chinese residing here practice these faiths strictly. Praying is a personal affair and usually takes place at home because there are no official days of worship. The Chinese community celebrate Chinese New Year as part of their culture and traditions in relation to enlivening daily routine. This celebration falls between late January and mid-February, it represents the first day of the Chinese Lunar calendar.



**Saahil is 10 months old and is a member of the Indian community.**

The Indian community first arrived in Northern Ireland in the 1920s and moved here for employment and business prospects. For generations they worked in the catering and clothing industries but later generations are characterised by their employment in professional and managerial positions, more noticeably within the health sector.

There are approximately 1,500 members of the Indian community living in Northern Ireland. The majority of the community follow the Hindu religion and the rest follow a Muslim or Sikh faith. Indian families are more likely to have larger average household sizes because extended families stay and live together where accommodation is large enough to support this. They place a huge emphasis on education and achieve a higher level of education than the general population by approximately 20%. The community has a strong reputation for entrepreneurship and success in business. They celebrate many festivals including Indian New Year and Diwali both of which are linked to spiritualism.



**Ross is 20 months old and is a member of the white Northern Irish community.**

Ross is white and is part of the majority community living in Northern Ireland. Ross is part of the Christian faith, celebrating Christmas and Easter. His parents, grandparents and previous generations of relatives are white Northern Irish.

Events which are celebrated in the white community are St Patrick's Day and/or 12<sup>th</sup> July. The white Northern Irish community is less likely than others to face any type of racism. The two main religious traditions followed by the white community are Protestant and Roman Catholic.



**Thandie is a year old and is of mixed race.**

Thandie, like many other children in our society, is of mixed race. Her mother is white and from Northern Ireland and her father is an African-Caribbean living in Northern Ireland. People are migrating here from all over the world and therefore our society and family composition is changing to reflect the diversity and changing attitudes within Northern Ireland.

Research shows that half of black students in Britain today have one white parent. Although Thandie is growing up in a Northern Irish culture, she will be fortunate to also learn and understand her father's African-Caribbean culture and traditions.



**Jakub is 18 months old and is a member of the Polish community.**

The largest minority ethnic community living across Northern Ireland is the Polish community. They have become a significant part of our community over the last five years.

Although we have no exact numbers, it is estimated that there are approximately 30,000 Polish people living in Northern Ireland at present (March 2010). This number was greater before the economic downturn of 2008 when approximately 14,000 people returned to Poland for employment prospects. The Polish community have tended to take up employment in sectors such as construction, food, hospitality and retail. Many Polish people are highly educated and qualified but are working in low skilled jobs that do not reflect their qualifications. 99% of the Polish community are Roman Catholic.



**Chloe is 2 years old and is a member of the Irish Traveller community.**

Irish Travellers, a minority community indigenous to Ireland, have existed on the margins of Irish society for centuries. They share common descent, and have distinct cultural practices - early marriage, desire to be mobile, a tradition of self-employment, and so on.

They have distinct rituals around death and cleansing, and a language they only speak among their own. Travellers are not overtly conscious of a sense of group history. Rather, the individual is defined by his/her place within the relationship network. Concern with ancestry is an

obsession of those who value permanence of place. They live in extended patriarchal families, prefer trailers, tend to be nomadic interspersed with occasional house dwelling, and maintain a nomadic mindset even when settled. A house is considered only a stopping place between journeys, whether the stop lasts 20 days or 20 years! There are an estimated 2,500 Travellers currently living in the Northern Ireland, many of whom have no access to toilet facilities, electricity, refuse collection or piped water due to limited access to fully serviced transit sites. This minority ethnic group faces the worst levels of racial discrimination in employment and service provision.

The Race Relations (NI) Order gives protection on grounds of race, ethnicity, national origin, colour or nationality. The areas protected are in relation to Employment, in the provision of Goods, Facilities or Services, Housing and in Education. Should you require further information or advice on the Race Relations Order, please contact our advice line on 028 90 890 890 or visit our website [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

The Commission wishes to express our sincere thanks to the following organisations and individuals for their assistance in developing this campaign.

- ArtsEkta [www.artsekta.co.uk](http://www.artsekta.co.uk)
- Chinese Welfare Association
- Polish Association
- Morrow Communications
- An Munia Tober
- Equality Commission staff members

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
March 2010