

Diversity within the Same Species

By: Melissa M. Williams

Adults keep the flow of diversity by stepping outside their comfort zones. Experience goes a long way in life, and in the grander scheme of things, we find who we are, when faced with our opposites and new experiences. The world is not the same everywhere you go. Cultural differences are all around: one career to the next, east to west, north to south, and from within the realm of indoors to outdoors. We learn from others and from their differences, taking on what is useful into our own lives and leaving what doesn't fit. Having lived in three major Texas cities, in the past five years, I am still wrestling with the thought of which one is more me. Traveling to new states and new countries remind me that there are many other ways to live while adapting to a new culture as well. Children try on different roles and styles, just as adults find peace within themselves. We live with purpose and constantly try for understanding.

Now let's take this concept and write with it. The third book in the Iggy Series will be the steppingstone to a Special Edition Series, set within the coastal states. The first destination and setting in the Turtle Town Series will be, the West Coast. I have not only chosen a state that is far off from Texas tradition, but I have chosen to experience and study the lifestyle of new people (and turtles) inside the sphere of a popular sport in San Diego, California, surfing! If you watch some of the greatest surfing movies, you may hear that surfing is a lifestyle, not just a hobby. There is a natural connection a person will experience, if allowed, by being close to the ocean. And it is another thing when life becomes the ocean. By exposing my readers to new places and people, in a tasteful fashion, it opens up a child's senses to a whole new level. The children will soon learn about the different types of sea turtles that inhabit the coastal areas, the foundations committed to helping turtles, marine life facts with a funny twist, the lessons and lingo of

riding the waves, and why differences will ultimately help groups come together. In life we all come from a universal theme, regardless of location, color, or abilities. Each of the different turtles in San Diego share the same need ... the need to belong.

The age group that I have chosen to write for is entering the cusp of building lasting friendships, but at the same time, friendship building also comes with exclusion and forming clicks. As we all know, clicks can then encourage bullying, which later leads to fighting, hence discrimination. By allowing children to read about the formation of clicks inside a society of turtles and witness the need for everyone to come together in the end, the major concept of empathy has again been used as a push toward acceptance. We learn from mistakes, because we remember the mistake and the consequence, so eventually the right way emerges if we are aware and accept the mistake. I allow the characters in Turtle Town to make mistakes, learn, become aware, and ultimately change. If the child reader relates to the situations presented in Turtle Town, and witnesses the characters that they have grown to love over the Iggy the Iguana series find a better way to resolve a conflict, it resonates to a different kind of level of understanding. This is the type of understanding that can later be used in real life situations to come.

Keep a look for Turtle Town updates as I visit the costal area during the Spring School Book Tour in the San Diego Unified School District. Visit www.MelissaMWilliamsAuthor.com or www.IggytheIguana.com for breaking news!