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June 5, 2016

Reflections on Our 2016 Inclusive Leadership Co-operative Gathering

Collaboratively prepared by 50 of the 90 wonderful and marvellous participants

*“A sincere, and heartfelt **Thank You** to the Inclusive Leadership Co-operative Team for sharing this experience of the Inclusive Leadership Co-operative Gathering with all of the unique individuals and wider community that were able to partake this past weekend. The energy and feeling from this past weekend, has imprinted on my heart.*

“I was humbled and honoured at how “at home” I felt in the environment that was created: open, connected, welcoming, supportive, encouraging, grounding, and fostering a sense of individual and collective well being through celebrating our diverse talents and gifts, as adding to the well being of society around us.

“This foundation was felt throughout the whole weekend; a beautiful demonstration of how the individual well being and the collective well being are reciprocal relationships... both impacting each other. The activities that were chosen, the way in which groups were formed, how we were encouraged to communicate with each other really created a space for meaningful relationships and connections to be shared... I can say that I connected with every generation there and built lasting relationships that I look forward to nurturing! So encouraging.” (Katie Sayers, Nanaimo, BC).

This feedback report from the June 2016 Inclusive Leadership Co-operative Gathering is based on a total of 374 comments gathered from 50 participants. We met in small intergenerational mentoring groups on the third day to fill out feedback and pledge forms.

There were 308 comments (82%) about what people liked and learned. These comments were sorted into the following themes:

- Theme 1: The step by step Building Bridges process for creating welcoming and inclusive communities results in a safe, respectful, equal, and joyful learning community. (182 comments)
- Theme 2: The choices of workshops and other challenge by choice activities provided opportunities for each person to tailor their own experiences (41 comments)
- Theme 3: Our diverse cultures, abilities, generations, and other backgrounds enriched our

- gathering. (38 comments)
- Theme 4: Our shared leadership contributed to a successful gathering. (18 comments)
- Theme 5: Some of us liked everything about the Inclusive Leadership Co-operative Gathering (17 comments)
- Theme 6: The Cowichan Lake Education Centre is a naturally welcoming environment (11 comments)

There were 66 comments (18%) describing challenges or making suggestions for future gatherings.

- Theme 1: Challenges and suggestions related to the workshops (14 comments)
- Theme 2: Challenges and suggestions related to meals, accommodations, and the venue (12 comments)
- Theme 3: Suggestions for reaching more people (11 comments)
- Theme 4: First Aid and health challenges and suggestions (11 comments)
- Theme 5: Challenges and suggestions related to the agenda and activities (10 comments)
- Theme 6: Inter-generational challenges (5 comments)
- Theme 7: Exclusion concerns (3 comments)

What We Liked and Learned

Theme 1: The step by step Building Bridges process for creating welcoming and inclusive communities results in a safe, respectful, equal, and joyful learning community. (182 comments)

The first two Building Bridges steps are networking and gathering (13 comments)

- *Thank you for the invite to help with the What Do You Do? film and the invite to the ILC Gathering*
- *I felt warmly invited into the gathering*
- *I learned about the importance of showing up*
- *How welcoming everyone was*
- *I appreciated the nice inclusive environment and how friendly everyone is.*
- *Making each new person arriving feel welcome and included*
- *Learning how to welcome people*
- *The importance of laughter*

The next two Building Bridges steps are building a community and relationships that are welcoming and inclusive. (30 comments)

- *A huge sense of community*
- *We gather to come together to support one another*
- *Radical inclusivity*
- *We created a safe and positive environment to take in all the new information and lessons being offered throughout the weekend*
- *I enjoy the great feeling and culture that is always made at these Inclusive Leadership events*
- *At Inclusive Leadership things can be messy and be okay (full of learning opportunities)*
- *I enjoyed meeting wonderful people*

- *We are awesome*
- *Making new friends*
- *I learned now it's okay to allow a person's reality to unfold organically (and have options) within safe boundaries*

Building Bridges Steps 4 and 5 are building skills and building awareness (95 comments)

We learned and practiced skills and awareness for connecting with differences

- *Building bridges instead of walls*
- *Look for peoples gifts*
- *Make an attempt to connect and cooperate with other cultures*
- *Try to find the common ground*
- *Listen and ask informative questions to better understand these differences*
- *Staying open and curious*
- *Accepting others lived experience without judgement*
- *Assume good intentions*
- *The value of connection*
- *The power of gratitude*

We developed Compassionate Communication skills and awareness

- *Be quieter and think more, for my silence is someone else's opportunity to speak.*
- *Just listening and not trying to fix ti*
- *Listen deeply*
- *Listen to children*
- *Listening and observing more closely*
- *Have a better tone of respect when communicating*
- *Having interpreters to bridge communication*
- *I will continue to practice Non Violent Communication and to testify on the benefits I've enjoyed*
- *Think before speaking*
- *Ensuring my needs are met or at least that I'm aware of what they are when I'm interacting with others.*
- *I did not know before, but now appreciate just how focused on communication Inclusive Leadership is*
- *The fact that communication was brought forth in a variety of ways*
- *Practice empathy*
- *It helps some friends to talk about painful things*
- *I appreciated the chance to expand my knowledge*

We learned some Anti-Discrimination First Aid Skills for responding effectively to situations of discrimination.

- *I learned how to show up for others more passionately*
- *Make amends with everyone*
- *I can talk about how other (non-white) races can also be racist*

- *Say sorry if you have pressed a point. Ask, "Is that Okay with you?"*
- *Speak out about discrimination (calmly if possible) and clearly*
- *Stand up for victims to make them not feel alone*
- *To gently pull aside the person and show a kinder way of creating inclusiveness*
- *Work to make laws against bullying*
- *The power of the whole to address discrimination*
- *Help people understand so they don't feel threatened by other cultures*

The final two Building Bridges steps are action planning and preparing for following up. (44 comments)

- *The dedication of many young people who are leading Inclusive Leadership events in their schools and communities*
- *Teams and friendships are a lot more important than I thought and can make powerful changes*
- *I will try to connect more with people on the margins*
- *I will be making an effort to learn more about the local indigenous community*
- *Just smile and say hi.*
- *I'm dedicated to teaching that the real languages (in the Deaf communities) are ASL, LSQ, LSF, BSL etc.*
- *I pledge to continue to improve and educate or share knowledge of cultural competency and the role society plays in embracing and keeping it alive and how action can also destroy the diversity.*
- *I plan to connect with the Mens society in my community*
- *I will continue my Multicultural Leaders Group contributions*
- *I am restarting a retired (retreat) centre on the Malahat using Inclusive Leadership principles*
- *I will bring these skills to my school, workplace, my home, and my community*
- *I would really like to be involved in local Pride and multicultural projects*
- *I will lead Cowichan Pride Activities*
- *My plan is to bring ILC concepts into my work with First Nations Men – both in group work and one to one*
- *Run workshops on male/father issues*
- *Thinking to invite a couple of youth to take the training to start a junior youth empowerment program for youth between ages 11 and 15*
- *Being myself, selflessly, helping others with issues in their lives.*
- *I learned that I am a person who can set people to open up and talk about their problems*
- *Bring my child and his friends to get connected with nature and beings on this planet.*
- *I will tell everyone I know about this camp/weekend so that it is not what I can do but is "What We Can Do."*
- *Communicate the skills and concepts I have learned this weekend and enlighten other people*
- *Continue to work on my own internal obstacles, such as my personal struggle to not judge myself for not being perfect*

- *I will try the Blind walk (and other activities) I learned in Inclusive Leadership workshops*
- *I appreciated how impactful the work can be in people's lives*
- *I will leave here seeing the transformation of many youth from one of tentativeness to one of confident engagement*
- *We are part of a worldwide co-operative movement that we can contribute to and learn from*

Theme 2: choices of workshops and other challenge by choice activities provided opportunities for each person to tailor their own experiences (41 comments)

- *I appreciated all the workshops I attended!*
- *The best part was being outdoors*
- *Connecting with the planets Mars and Saturn*
- *I appreciate the workshops that open the window for me to connect with nature and the beings, and elements on this planet*
- *Learning how to facilitate a heart to heart group*
- *I wanted to lead a workshop, let people know about my passions. It was very successful*
- *Inclusive Art with Lindsay Beal*
- *Rhythms of diversity with Amy and Tafadzwa Matamba*
- *Music can teach sooo much more than a thousand words can*
- *The Inter-Cultural Competency workshop with April Struthers was extremely informative and I really enjoyed and appreciated it.*
- *Hula Hoop Game to help the connection*
- *I enjoyed swimming the lake with new friends*
- *Making friendship bracelets*
- *Other experiences of education and art*
- *Playing with the kids*
- *The game of Mow/Mow*
- *The swimming*
- *I enjoyed the welcoming activities*
- *I appreciate the gesture of sharing a video as a means of educating us on Inclusive Leadership*

Theme 3: Our diverse cultures, abilities, generations, and other backgrounds enriched our gathering. (39 comments)

- *I appreciated the uniqueness of all the diverse voices and seeing people step into their leadership and find their voices*
- *Connecting with the diversity of the community is what builds the bridge*
- *Differences are expressions of gifts*
- *Diverse creative expression*
- *I learned that diversity is necessary*
- *I learned about cultures and differences between them*
- *The diversity of voices, this time noticeable from youth, strengthen the messages of Inclusive Leadership*
- *I found some people have brilliant talents that I would not know if there was not gathering like*

this.

- *Big group safety. This place felt safe to be around lots of people because they don't question your quietness*
- *Being an inclusive leader comes in a variety of forms that can take place in many different ways*
- *I liked being part of an intergenerational family*
- *Everyone's willingness to get into intergenerational mentor teams and support each other was great.*
- *I learned about the importance of father/male figures*
- *I appreciate the opportunity to network and interact with members of the community, especially intergenerationally*
- *The intergenerational aspect is so rewarding and really puts into practice a community raising its children and caring for the elders*
- *Loved the way the facilitators challenged the intergenerational mentorship groups to solve some of the issues that arose over the weekend*
- *We can share leadership in tending and befriending youth*
- *So many faces and leaders behind us*

Theme 4: Our shared leadership contributed to a successful gathering. (17 comments)

- *I appreciated the great skills of our leaders who were the organizers this time*
- *The pacing was good. It allowed for more connection*
- *I have learned there is no such thing as one leader. There are multiple role models*
- *I learned about letting go of "ownership" when working collaboratively*
- *A pleasure to learn the principles (of Inclusive Leadership) through great role modelling.*
- *I am appreciating the concrete and specific ways in which all voices are heard*
- *I enjoyed learning by observing, participating, practicing*

Theme 5: Some of us liked everything about the Inclusive Leadership Co-operative Gathering (17 comments)

- *Appreciated all of it*
- *Awesome place*
- *Everything was helpful*
- *Thank you for allowing me to participate in this amazing community and lessons to grow*
- *I am grateful for how much fun I had*
- *What the ILC has been doing is working. Keep doing it.*

Theme 6: The Cowichan Lake Education Centre is a naturally welcoming environment (11 comments)

- *The naturally welcoming environment that this place has to offer*
- *My bed*
- *I appreciated the food*
- *The outside seating*

Challenges and Suggestions

Theme 1: Challenges and suggestions related to the workshops (14 comments)

- *For those of us who are visual great to have a description of the different break out workshops in visual format in addition to auditory*
- *I came in late, so I may have missed it, but having the main teachings of Inclusive Leadership repeated throughout would be beneficial*
- *I found that I would have liked to have descriptions of the workshops ahead of time*
- *I would have loved to have more time to experience other workshops*
- *Not being able to attend workshops that were offered at the same time as another. There were a few I though would be a fantastic additions in my repertoire of skills development*
- *Too many great workshops that I had a hard time choosing*
- *Workshops presented only once meant sacrifice of learning in one area*
- *To try to be open to the workshops I was unfamiliar with*
- *I'm not a person who enjoys workshops about nature, so more workshops based around diversity and anti-discrimination would be nice*
- *More workshops geared towards those self identifying as male*
- *A workshop session was cut short at the start so it was difficult to fit in for the full discussion*
- *I would have rather had workshops that were 1 hour and 15 minutes*
- *I wish we could have more time for the workshops so that we can go deeper on the topics we are focusing on.*

Theme 2: Challenges and suggestions related to meals, accommodations, and the venue (12 comments)

- *Have pre-assigned rooms in the dorms*
- *Keeping kids in their parent's rooms if they wish*
- *Turn down the heat at nighttime*
- *Not enough sleep*
- *Mentors saying 'shush' in the dorms*
- *Too hot in the big room*
- *Invite Jennifer to say something about the CLEC*
- *Have breakfast later than 8:30 am*
- *Have cups and jugs of water on the tables.*
- *Improved pre planning of food for people who are diabetic*
- *Meal plans and a menu to pre-determine what is being served*
- *Some meals the food was put away before it was all gone and people wanted to eat more*

Theme 3: Suggestions for reaching more people (12 comments)

- *More advertising*
- *Promotional video to refer people to to show them what actually happens*
- *Expanding as much as you can*
- *I think building upon what has already been implemented to bring a deeper and broader understanding of what Inclusive Leadership is about*
- *Have more Deaf people participating*

- *Invite more government and corporate individuals to participate so that they can bring these principles back to their organizations to support*
- *Involve more people from everywhere.*
- *A gathering in the summer for those tied to the regular school year*

Theme 4: First Aid and health challenges and suggestions (11 comments)

- *Identify a certified First Aid Person and First Aid Supplies*
- *Add a sunscreen station*
- *More reminders to drink water, apply sunscreen etc*
- *Add nap time*
- *Bug spray is a necessity*

Theme 5: Challenges and suggestions related to the agenda and activities (9 comments)

- *A campfire next to the lake*
- *More swimming*
- *Perhaps more music*
- *Funnner challenge by choice options for teens*
- *Have a dance party on Saturday night as the celebration instead of sitting*
- *A bit more freedom after everyone comes out of their shells.*
- *More free time*
- *The tight schedule for sure. I do understand that this is not a summer camp, but there shoud've been (in my opinion) a lot more open ends*
- *More days*

Theme 6: Inter-generational challenges (5 comments)

- *Coming from a teen, you'd expect this, but have less rules. A better way of saying this is encourage what we can do, rather than demonize what we can't do.*
- *More intergenerational facilitators*
- *A special focus is needed on the young men that attend. Their high energy is not directed and could be a valuable addition to the ILC*
- *The youth were wonderful, however, I think that it would be helpful if they came with mentors or someone who knew them to support – especially some of the more vulnerable youth*
- *It was difficult to role model and supervise the young teens and pre teens during night time as by the end of the day I was drained. But I still did my responsibilities with compassion and respect*

Theme 7: Exclusion concerns (3 comments)

- *It was hard for (adults and pre-teens) to fit in the with the teens. Difficult to break barriers for a loved one.*
- *Big groups are difficult for quiet (shy) people*
- *Coming in late. I found it difficult (but do-able) to integrate into the energy of the greater group*