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Inclusive Leadership Co-operative Annual Gathering

June 2 to 4, 2017

Feedback from Participants

Introduction by Linda Hill, ILC Co-ordinator

Thank you so much to the wonderful and marvellous seventy-nine people who participated in our Inclusive Leadership Co-operative 2017 Annual Gathering June 2 to 3, 2017. We were a very diverse group in identities such as our ages (16 months to 75 years old), language and cultural backgrounds (from all over the world), leadership experiences (students, professionals, volunteers), life circumstances, sexual and gender orientations, diverse abilities, diverse personalities, and diverse ways of making a positive difference in the world.

Seventy-five participants live on Vancouver Island, BC, Canada in places such as Saanich, Sooke, Victoria, Duncan, North Cowichan, Ladysmith, Nanaimo, Courtney, Campbell River and Sayward. In addition to people who come from throughout Vancouver Island, each year the ILC welcomes a few people from other parts of the Canada and the world. In past years we have welcomed participants from Quebec(2014, 2015, 2016), California (2014, 2015), England (2014, 2015) and Germany (2014)). This year, we had the honour of welcoming four courageous participants who came all the way from the ICC Austin Student Housing Co-operative, University of Texas.

Thank you Mila, Roxanne, Scott and Noah for travelling so far to be with us! One of the outcomes of your efforts is that all of us in the Inclusive Leadership Co-operative are feeling strong and confident in our role in contributing to the International Co-operative Movement. Your presence enriched our learning community in so many ways. We hope you enjoyed experiencing Inclusive Leadership in action and learned as much as you hoped you would learn from the workshops, activities and informal interactions. We are happy to have sent you back to Austin, Texas with memories, stories, Inclusive Leadership skills and a Unity Flag.

The following organizations were represented at our Inclusive Leadership Co-operative Gathering:

- British Columbia Responsible & Problem Gambling Program
- Cowichan Intercultural Society, Cowichan, BC
- Earth Literacies, Victoria, BC
- Headway - Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson's Centre
- ICC Student Housing Co-operative, Austin, Texas
- John Howard Society, Campbell River, BC
- Michael's Steps to Justice Society, Duncan, BC
- School District 79

- Social Planning Cowichan - Safe Youth Cowichan
- Vancouver Island University, Vancouver Island, BC
- Unity Flag, Victoria, BC

The fifty-three people who participated in the entire weekend co-wrote this feedback report. 170/226 of the feedback comments (75%) were about things people liked and learned. 56/226 (25%) were concerns and suggestions for improvement. The ILC will build on the 75% of comments about what worked well by continuing to do those things that resulted in joy and learning. We will address the 25% of comments that were concerns (well except for the lake being too cold this year!) and see what we can do to implement the suggestions (well except for the suggestion that we organize a month-long gathering next year!). The outcome will be an Inclusive Leadership Gathering that is even better next year! Here is the feedback from participants organized into themes:

We enjoyably sharing leadership in Building Bridges to an inclusive and welcoming community (38 comments)

- *Making connections*
- *Since we are not from this area, it was great to be accepted here*
- *Finding ease and inclusivity*
- *I learned to trust the process of organizing the event. This lead to ease.*
- *Positive energy based on being here to support each other with no competition*
- *A general sense of happiness in everyone*
- *Acceptance and support*
- *felt very welcomed*
- *in big groups I usually feel shy, but by the end of the weekend I was completely comfortable*
- *seeing friendly faces every day*
- *slowing down*
- *The warmth, friendship and openness of everyone*
- *The whole atmosphere and ambience of love, togetherness and respect.*
- *Welcoming warm feeling*
- *Creating a safe space*
- *Lifeguards and others helping care for our kids*
- *Being able to trust the community*
- *Community (3)*
- *Conversations*
- *We liked the challenge by choice format*
- *Freedom to choose*
- *Enjoyed my child being here - seemed really happy.*
- *Everyone was so quick to help*
- *Fellowship*
- *Felt supported and cared for*
- *hanging out with my family and sharing IL with my family*
- *lots of trust in the evening*
- *Multicultural groups*
- *opportunities for conversations*

- *refreshing experience*
- *sense of community being here*
- *sharing*
- *sharing knowledge*
- *watch people grow*
- *Willingness to be open and share*
- *Feeling very supported and nourished*

We appreciated the ILC Gathering activities and workshops. (33 comments)

- *Opening circle*
- *Concentric circles conversations*
- *Addiction workshop – anything with short term relief that causes a longer term problem can be addictive or lead to addiction*
- *Screen-time with Karen*
- *Connecting with Differences Workshop*
- *Enjoyed the unity flag and art workshop (4)*
- *I learned how to connect with nature on the nature walk*
- *The nature walk was a lot of fun*
- *I like the workshops. New perspective on ideas I had before or learned about. For instance Connecting with Differences – gave a new way for me to mediate and intersect with people with different ideas.*
- *The different workshops*
- *the workshops were fun*
- *Variety of workshops was excellent*
- *workshops*
- *Liked the community celebration (3)*
- *Celebration Night*
- *enjoyed the celebration – so much joyful talent*
- *Enjoyed the talent show*
- *Liked the campfire (4)*
- *Fire was awesome*
- *I learned to tell good ghost stories*
- *The campfire was a lot of fun*
- *Enjoyed the swimming*
- *Swimming (4)*

What a wonderful and marvellously diverse group of people gathered together! (31 comments)

- *Enjoyed the people (5)*
- *Meeting new people and hearing their stories*
- *Enjoyed meeting new people (5)*
- *Who is here*
- *meeting a lot of new people (2)*
- *made new friends*

- *getting to know people*
- *listening to people's experiences*
- *meeting new humans*
- *Chatting with people from different backgrounds*
- *Enjoyed talking to interesting people*
- *meeting people from various cultures and locations*
- *meeting people from different cultures*
- *Great to see all the kids*
- *Enjoyed the inter-generational gathering*
- *I live in a student coop so it is nice to see and hear the experiences of those outside of a student age range.*
- *inter-generational cooperation*
- *Mixture of ages*
- *Mixture of abilities*
- *lots of differences between people's abilities but we are still the same in value*
- *I learned that people come from different places and things are different there.*
- *Differences are strengths providing a large perspective of the world*
- *Differences are strengths*
- *people come in all shapes and sizes and colours but we're all the same on the inside*
- *hearing peoples stories*
- *I go to different kinds of groups. Not everyone likes to talk. But that is not so here. Here everyone likes to talk and meet new people*
- *learning from new people*
- *learning from other people*

We had lots of informal opportunities for creating and learning (13)

- *art*
- *henna*
- *The art*
- *Learned ASL*
- *Learning a little ASL*
- *more sign language than I have ever had*
- *Sign language*
- *I learned I have talent with the piano.*
- *I learned new songs*
- *Music*
- *the music*
- *Learned about gardening*
- *the importance of stillness*

We learned some Inclusive Leadership skills (13 comments)

- *I learned that fight/flight/freeze is a response to the unfamiliar*
- *Relaxation*
- *Boundaries – respecting and being mindful of my needs and others needs*
- *I appreciated observing the children learning about boundaries.*
- *How to speak kindly*
- *I can't push the river. Everyone has a pace, a rhythm that I can witness and appreciate*
- *I had a lot of practice breaking down my own mental rigidity. I have a very 'cookie cutter' mentality with my parents at home and so I can become very stubborn in my thinking about anything that I'm not regularly exposed to. Challenging this is a fantastic thing to do.*
- *I learned how to be creative*
- *I learned to encourage without pressure*
- *Able to talk about things that concern me*
- *Reminded of compassionate communication and different ways of communicating*
- *The opportunities for growth, learning, stepping out of comfort zones*
- *Turn defensiveness into curiosity*

Kid Culture was safe, creative and fun (9 comments)

- *Doing the plays*
- *I learned how to play magic, and I enjoyed playing Magic with Stephen and Wesley*
- *I learned to lead kids in a new environment safely*
- *Kids culture was fun*
- *Making costumes and props for the play*
- *playing with kids*
- *Playing with other kids*
- *The play we presented*
- *Magic Card Game*

The food (9)

- *Enjoyed the food (3)*
- *loved the food*
- *Kudos to the cooks*
- *Food was good (2)*
- *Food (2)*

The natural CLEC site (7 comments)

- *the environment (natural setting)*
- *Seeing the deer was awesome*
- *Options for being outside*
- *being outside*
- *so peaceful*
- *nature*
- *Lovely site*

Everything was great (6)

- *Everything was great*
- *Everything!*
- *It went off without a hitch*
- *Nothing stands out as needing improvement*
- *I honestly could not make any real suggestions.*
- *We couldn't think of anything to change*

Appreciated the schedule (5 comments)

- *Structure, layout of the program*
- *lots of free time*
- *There were enough breaks which gave lots of opportunity to talk and connect*
- *breaks*
- *Good pacing for all activities*

These are the concerns and suggestions for improvement:

Concerns and suggestions for Cowichan Lake Education Centre (20 comments)

- *Lakeview motel unit floors were sticky*
- *dorm bathrooms smelled of pee*
- *not enough hooks for wet washcloths in the cabin 1*
- *leaky sink in cabin 1 made for a wet floor*
- *beds not ready on time and we were told to leave the dorms until ready. Mine already had bedding. It was just a few that didn't. They should have just asked who doesn't have bedding and given it to them.*
- *We had to do a search for bedding in the dorms*
- *Sleeping arrangements – my bed was small*
- *Cold water for swimming*
- *A little too cold*
- *Except that the lake was really cold*
- *no hypothermia next year*
- *Comfier beds with more pillows.*
- *make sure the lights work*
- *double beds instead of 2 twins*
- *would have been better if we could have put our stuff away before dinner (trivial)*
- *When staff has gone home, a plan should be made for things that people need*
- *need more organic tea choices*
- *Not enough vegetables*
- *local ethically sourced food would be nice*
- *Make the grab bars in the handicapped bathroom longer and a different angle. They were not useful for the individual who needed to use them.*

Things to add in or bring next year (10 suggestions)

- *Bring dress up clothes, wigs and goodies for the celebration*
- *Would like the opportunity to take every workshop and not have to opt out, so offer each workshop more than once.*
- *Would like cleaner spaces with a sign up for a job: A collaborative job list that acknowledges and supports the work and organization of the program*
- *Marshmallows – bring more next year and bring ingredients for smores*
- *A workshop on communication skills – assertiveness skills for kids*
- *More helping kids with their issues*
- *Breakfast needs to be later*
- *A bell to warn and call people to breakfast (or a drum)*
- *Would like one more day to connect and absorb what we learned*
- *make it a month long*

Concerns and suggestions about activities and workshops (9)

- *The first day could be more organized*
- *Way of council seems a bit light this weekend*
- *The Earth Charter activity could use more development*
- *I was hoping for more skill learning*
- *I wanted heart to heart groups*
- *I wanted the gift giving ceremony*
- *Talent show earlier in the weekend.*
- *Didn't like the scary stories around the campfire. Have space for scary stories separately like we did on the first night.*
- *There was no telescope this year*
- *People coming late to workshops kept things superficial*
- *More activities that engage children earlier in the day each day from the first day*
- *Didn't get a chance to do all the workshops that were offered*

Suggestions to increase safety (6 suggestions)

- *We need to have an emergency plan with an air horn and signals and a muster place, and a head count so we know how many people are on site at all times.*
- *Make it more clear about who is responsible for which children and youth – which adults they are connected to*
- *Sleeping in the dorms was difficult for me. I stayed up late because I don't like to sleep with strangers. Suggestion that we get to know our room mates or options to sleep privately.*
- *replace the yellow glue gun that is dangerous and burns, or have adults only use it.*
- *Iced should be available for first aid. Perhaps ice could be in the fridge in the other building*
- *The first aider should be more clearly identified.*

- *add henna as an activity*
- *pick from a hat to have a meal partner*
- *More opportunities to connect with the children in the challenge by choice times*
- *provide smores for campfires*