

How to be an Ally in your Community

Co-creating Durable and Cohesive
Communities through Inclusion

That which fragments Communities

- * Colonial past
- * Race, colour, national or ethnic origin
- * Religion
- * Gender identity or expression, sexual orientation
- * Mental and/or physical disability, genetic characteristics
- * Marital status, family status
- * Source of income, social status
- * Political belief
- * And...

Power, Authority and Privilege as agents of Exclusion

- * “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely” – Lord Acton et al
- * Exclusion is the **result** of power and authority exercised arbitrarily
- * Lack of intent is not a defence to systemic exclusion
- * Power and authority are discernible
- * Privilege (“A right, advantage, or **immunity** granted or **available** to a particular person or a group of people”) not always apparent to those endowed with it
- * Analogous to a tailwind for some and a headwind for others

“Better to light a candle...”

Organizing a Community at the local level

- * Mobilizing neighbours to stand with neighbours who were victims of racial violence
- * Experimental work at a local community level
- * Power, authority, privilege rested with others

Building a Community at the National level

- * Negotiating new Legal Aid Agreements with Provinces and Territories
- * Re-structuring the F/P/T relationship
- * Power shared to co-create a new future

Organizing a Community at the local level

- * Canadians of Indian origin subjected to personal violence, harassment and damage to property
- * Conversations with those with privilege, power and authority to seek support
- * Knocking on doors to test awareness and interest in developing a community solution to local violence
- * Community meeting to discuss their ideas for helping
- * No “grand plan” but neighbours reached out to neighbours who were previously isolated
- * Measurable difference in outcome
- * Model was replicated in Williams Lake and elsewhere

Building a Community at the National level

- * F/P/T Legal Aid Agreements canceled – budget cuts
- * Minister wanted targeted federal contributions with reduced budget
- * F/P/T relations strained by federal budget reductions and upcoming Quebec Referendum
- * Transformational approach needed to build new relationships – a new Community of interest
- * Power sharing and co-management of a National Program predicated on a new understanding
- * New innovative approach to needs of the Territories

Key Personal Learnings

- * Focus on solutions and avoid re-statement of problems
- * The touchstone is the “what” and not the “how”
- * Recognize that differing interests are not an obstacle to durable solutions; they are a starting point for a conversation
- * Keep the ego in check
- * Go to the place where people are in their comfort zone and you are not in yours
- * Developing sound and healthy relationships requires sharing power, authority and recognizing the influence of privilege