

CANADIAN UNITARIAN COUNCIL
Racial and First Nations Equity Monitoring Group

WELCOMING/CELEBRATING CONGREGATIONAL DIVERSITY A WORKSHOP
FORMAT (16 March
2006)

I. PURPOSE

This workshop (WCCD) outline is offered here as a resource for the general membership of congregations wishing to consider their openness to diversity, both in membership and staffing. It addresses the categories of race and ethnicity, including First Nations heritage.

Congregations are urged to use Welcoming Congregation material if considering sexual orientation or gender identification. (Physical ability and class were considered outside the scope of the Monitoring Group which prepared this material, but workshop leaders may wish to make reference to the interrelatedness of all such prejudices.)

II. HISTORY

Much of the text of this workshop is based on Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT), originally prepared by the Unitarian Universalist Association to assist Search Committees, seeking to fill the pulpit of their congregation, to consider individuals regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, physical ability, or class origin.

For a fuller history of BCT and description of the program visit:

<http://www.uua.org/programs/idbm/bct/>

III. LEADERSHIP

There should be two leaders, one of whom should if possible be a member of one of the minorities being considered. If such a person is not within your congregation, you might consider inviting local resource person(s) from outside the congregation. This is particularly important if First Nations concerns are to be explored.

Some advise having an additional workshop devoted primarily to First Nations.

You may contact the CUC Racial and First Nations Equity Monitoring Group <mac@slc.bc.ca> for names of persons who have conducted BCT or WCCD workshops, and might be willing to advise you. If you do invite an experienced outside workshop leader, that leader should be offered

transportation and hotel accommodation. (After the stress of workshop leadership, most leaders value private time alone.) A minister or ministerial student speaking Sunday morning as part of the workshop weekend should receive the usual honourarium. Any honourarium apart from transportation and hotel accommodation for lay leaders would be arranged by the congregation with the invited leaders.

Some feel that since this is a relatively simple workshop, and most congregations have good workshop leaders, congregation could take advantage of training sessions at CUC and regional meetings for workshop leaders so that members of the congregation can run their own workshop. The first such training is scheduled for CUC ACM Vancouver 2007. Using congregational leaders would serve several purposes: (a) give your congregation ownership of your own workshop; (b) not cost as much since you aren't bringing people in; (c) more likely lead to work beyond a one-shot workshop since the interested leaders are in the congregation; (d) be more like the model for Welcoming Congregation where the leaders have to search out and use local resources -- which, in the long run is really more appropriate to working with any 'isms'.

IV. RESOURCES FROM THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, ETC.

Valuable advice for workshop leaders may also be found (following worship material for Christian churches) in the kit "Undoing Racism" created by Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racists Network (CEARN), a project of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). The kit also contains suggested resources.

<http://www.ccc-cce.ca/english/justice/racism.htm>>

Films on First Nations issues are available from:

<http://www.firstnationsfilms.com> <coyote00@telus.net>

V. SIZE AND COMPOSITION

The WCCD workshop works best with no fewer than twenty, and up to 100 more participants, in order to have a variety of opinions expressed.

Consideration might be given to either conducting the workshop for youth with younger leaders, or making it clear that youth are welcome to attend the adult sessions, with one younger leader.

VI. THE WHOLE PACKAGE

The following elements should be included in the weekend: (a) communication between workshop leader(s) and professional leadership or someone else who knows the congregation and community to talk about local issues related to categories; (b) dinner with the Board and Social Responsibility Committee where any of their concerns related to 'categories' are raised as well as their insights into their congregation and 'categories' -- here's where leaders learn about experiences related to categories in the local area and in the congregation so that they are aware of any 'subterranean' issues before the workshop; (c) worship service led by the workshop leaders on diversity issues; (d) lunch with the entire congregation after the service where the workshop leaders do a lot of circulating among members; (e) the workshop itself. Since this is a one-shot workshop with an attempt to raise awareness and begin to get people thinking about issues that may be under the surface rather than immediately evident, each of these pieces is important.

VII. PREPARATION

Considerable preparation is required prior to the workshop. In addition to consulting CCC's "Undoing Racism" kit, and preparing a worship service, see particularly the research needed at IX 5 and IX 6 below, and the form called for in number seven (appended here). You may need to substitute more Unitarian related material for the worship materials in the CCC kit. In our hymnal "Singing the Living Tradition" see particularly responsive reading #584 'A network of mutuality', and hymns 149 'Lift every voice', #156 'Oh, freedom', #170 'We are a gentle, angry people'.

VIII, FOLLOWUP

It is recognized that more is needed than the one workshop. The workshop should be the beginning of an ongoing process. People ask about going beyond the workshop. This may be in the form of dealing with other 'categories', such as theological categories, class, and American/Canadian cultural differences. Congregations might consider running their own workshops covering these categories since the format is relatively straightforward. This workshop outline may be adapted for use with other categories.

See suggestions in Section IX 9 for what other actions might be taken to follow up on workshop concerns.

IX. WORKSHOP OUTLINE

1. GETTING TO KNOW THE PARTICIPANTS

A. As you begin the workshop, introduce yourselves to the participants. (Be

brief)

B. Get acquainted with the congregation by asking for a show of hands in response to the following questions:

*Who has been with this congregation more than 10 years?

*More than 20 years?

*Less than 5 years?

*Less than 1 year?

*Who is serving on the Board? The Membership Committee? Has served on the Board or is a past officer?

*Teachers, or has taught religious education classes for children?

*Been a youth advisor?

*Serves or has served on the Religious Education Committee? The Finance Committee? Currently serving on a committee in the congregation?

*Are part of the ministry with and to youth

*Have attended events with U*U's from other congregations? (I.e., youth conferences, regional gatherings or CUC Annual Conference and Meeting.)

2. HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT?

In this exercise, participants are asked to use their imaginations to experience a different perspective.

Ask members of the group to sit with eyes closed, and engage in imagining the following situation:

=====

You are at a store counter, and the clerk is rude to you.

We all experience grumpy, short, or irate service from time to time. Sometimes it's because the clerk is a grumpy person most of the time. Sometimes the clerk is a generally polite person having a bad day. Sometimes it's because you are doing something the clerk thinks is rude. Sometimes it's because the customer in front of you was a piece of work.

Imagine yourself in this situation, and as a member of a minority group recognizable as such. Might you not assume that the rudeness is racist? Sometimes, if you're a minority, it is because the clerk is racist. To you, as a customer, all these reasons seem to have the same effect. If you experience racism on a regular basis, you will notice that clerks are ruder, and rude more often, to you than to others, but the reasons behind the rudeness are not usually explicit. How do you know WHEN you are experiencing it and when it's just part of the ups and downs of life?

It can be exhausting and fruitless to try and figure out. It takes extra energy all the time just to be in relationship with the world around you. Imagine having to live with that constantly.

How do you think you would react? Do you think you would be more or less sensitive to rudeness?

If you are the victim of such rudeness, what might you say to the clerk? If you witness such rudeness to a minority member, is there anything you might say to the clerk? To the person badly treated?

=====
=====

Allow a short time for people to attempt to answer these questions.

After a short break, have participants count off by threes. Ask: Ones to change their race. Twos to change their ethnic origin and first language, Threes to assume they are First Nations (if First Nations persons are part of the group, ask them to assume they are of European ancestry).

Then ask them to think about their lives, including their education and employment histories, and how they might have been different if that change were real.

Have them turn to a person near them and in pairs briefly discuss what differences this might have made in their lives. Give them about five to six minutes for this, giving them an indication when time is half-way done.

Then ask participants to raise their hands in response to the following statements:

*If this change would have made your life more difficult.

*If this change would have made your life easier.

*If you think the change would have made no difference.

Point out that according to democratic principles and what we tell ourselves about equality, it should make no difference, yet we can see from the show of hands that it does. You may wish to take a moment or two and process this out loud. Though keeping this short is a good idea. (Note: almost invariably most people think their lives would have been different. If, however, you have a group where there are more than 10-20% of the folks who say their lives may not have been different, this may be an indication of denial, and the need for some real work ahead.)

3. INTRODUCING THE WORKSHOP

Briefly inform participants that a program called Beyond Categorical Thinking (on which this is based) began in the 1980's to assist our congregations in achieving equal opportunity in the ministerial search process, initially funded by gay and lesbian ministers in search, and later by the UUA to also assist women and minorities in finding pulpits. It HAS developed to look specifically at three categories of ministers: ministers who are people of colour, ministers who are bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender, and ministers with physical disabilities. Women were removed from the program after their success in finding pulpits.

In 2006 the workshop materials were were adapted with permission for Canadian use with congregational members to help congregations explore their readiness to be more diverse, particular in terms of race, ethnicity, first language, and First Nations status.

Although people often want to talk about theological diversity, this is not the place to do that. It simply isn't part of this workshop. Acknowledge that that would be a useful and informative conversation for them to have at another time and place, and move on. You might want to call attention to the interfaith curriculum "Rainbowmaking", URI in Section IX 9.

4. GROUP IDENTITY

(Note: this whole activity should take no more than 10 minutes.)

Point out to the group that each of us represents different groups simultaneously, and that we're going to spend a few minutes looking at some of the many groups of which that some of us are part. Inform them that you will call out the names of different groups; as you call out the name of a group that an individual identifies with, those persons should raise their hands.

Call out words like:

Only child

Oldest child

Youngest child

Middle child

Card player

Left-handed

Snorers

Student

Likes to play (pick a particular sport like tennis, golf, softball, or skiing)

White males

Went to private school at some point (K-12)

Works with computers

Is computer phobic

Parents

Unemployed at least once

Has lived in (this province) all their life

Is from the East/Interior/West Coast/North (choose one or more as appropriate for the group)

Has lived abroad

Is an immigrant to Canada from another country

Grew up Unitarian

Grew up attending a Christian church

Grew up attending a religion other than Unitarian or Christian

Never attended church until they became a Unitarian.

Note: Try to use group names that reflect a wide diversity of groups. You may want to mention: specific ethnic groups -- Latina/o, Asian, Black, First Nations, European ancestry, mixed-race, etc.

Occupations: educator, doctor, lawyer, musician, nurse, business owner, etc.

Family status, hobbies, religious background, etc. may also be added.

Debrief by noting that each of us is different, each of us belongs to many identity groups. However, what often happens is that we may think of people who are a different race, different ethnic origin or first language, or First Nations status as being single dimensional people. Many of their other identities which might be the same as ours are forgotten or not noticed.

In reality, of course, we may all be similar in more ways than we think.

Point out that for each category there are positive and negative connotations/stereotypes, each person present belongs to several categories. While categorizing things is a natural human process, when we put people into categories and use those categories as a basis for judging them, often applying moral judgments, then we are engaging in categorical thinking and that's where the harm arises.

SELECTIVE FILTERING

Explain the dynamics of prejudicial thinking that involve a selective filtering of information, so that behaviour that reinforces our stereotype is noticed and reinforces our categorical thinking, while behavior that does not conform to our stereotypes tends to be dismissed as an exception to the rule.

Note: These first four activities should not take more than an hour. Adjust as necessary to fit that time frame. The bulk of the time should be spent on the "Eliciting Their Concerns" part of the workshop.

5. NON-DISCRIMINATION IN WELCOMING MEMBERS AND STAFFING

You may read or provide the group with printed paraphrases or excerpts from the Social Responsibility Resolutions on the Canadian Unitarian Council Website on racism and First Nations justice.

http://cuc.ca/social_responsibility/racial_equality.htm

http://cuc.ca/social_responsibility/first_nations_justice.htm

You may wish to take a selection of CUC pamphlets to leave with members:

<http://www.cuc.ca/programs/pamphlets_cuc.htm>

"Unitarians and Social Responsibility" might be particularly appropriate.

6. LOCAL MEMBERSHIP AND RESOURCE POOL

Prior to the workshop, learn something of the racial and ethnic makeup of the community in which the congregation is located. Impart this information to participants at this point. The local public library should be able to assist you with census figures. Census figures are also available online:

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/home/index.cfm>

Also learn something of local programs and resources for combating racism. Consulting with the Social Responsibility Committee of the congregation (SRC) if there is one, and/or Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (CUSJ) members in the congregation might be helpful.

7. ELICITING THEIR CONCERNS

Ask them to reflect on the categories of community members of which you have spoken. Pass out a WORKSHOP FORM to each participant. Explain that what they write on the form is to be collected and read anonymously to facilitate the afternoon's discussion. Request legible printing and brief, concise statements; this helps to keep the workshop within the time frame.

In the PERSONAL CONCERNS section of the form, ask them to list any concerns they might have as individuals regarding the possibility of their congregation including members or hiring staff in any of these life categories. What comes up for you as you consider a larger number of members, or staff, of colour (please be clear that a person of color does not mean just Black, but includes Latinos, Hispanics, Asians, First Nations People). Point out that for one or more of the categories, some people may not have a personal concern. Ask them to write "None". This is not the place for statements of why this would be a good thing; that goes in the "Benefits section".

In the CONGREGATIONAL CONCERNS section of the form, ask them to list any

concerns they think OTHERS in the congregation might have. Request that they not repeat any concerns they've already listed in the personal section. (This saves reading/recording time)

In the BENEFITS section of the form, ask them to record any benefits they can think of that might result from having more members or staff in these life categories. How might your congregation benefit from or be challenged by diversification in its membership and staff? Would leadership positions be equally open to all? (Note: Be aware that often the "Benefits" are as stereotypical as the "Concerns.")

This three-section format pretty much gets all of the agenda on the table, for what concerns they don't admit individually usually get ascribed to others. The third section often surprises them, and gets them pondering possible benefits. Give them about 10 - 12 minutes to fill out the forms, then shuffle, and redistribute one to each participant. (You may want to tell people that if they get their own back in this redistribution, they can just read it as if it wasn't theirs.)

Please remind people that we should take each concern seriously. At times, some of the statements may seem foolish or not what we expect from our congregation members, but we've asked people to honestly share their concerns with us and we should respect their efforts to do so. Anyway, we can't deal with concerns if they're not stated. You may have to remind them of this part of the way through the workshop.

It is important to get the "Concerns" and "Benefits" up on newsprint as quickly and efficiently as possible. We really want to have at least an hour to process them. You may wish to solicit one or two volunteers to help write the concerns on newsprint or to count the number of people with the same concerns, or tape sheets up as they are finished.

Ask participants to look over the first category on the form. For each category, ask how many had a "None" response, and record those first. Be sure when processing the newsprint responses later to acknowledge the number of "None" responses received. Ask one of the participants to read aloud a personal concern from that first category on the form. Then request that anyone who has a similar concern listed on the sheet they have raise their hand; record the number of hands raised for that concern. Next, ask someone else to read aloud a new concern in that same category, and repeat the hand-raising process. Continue this process until all concerns in a category have been raised and recorded. Next do the Congregational Concerns in the same way. Then do the "Benefits" for that category in the same manner.

Proceed to the next category and repeat the process. Once all concerns for each category are listed, proceed to a general discussion of specific points.

8. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC POINTS.

Here is where your own personality and skills as a facilitator really enter the process. There are usually 10 or 15 significant issues which have been raised on the newsprint, and it's your job to get at them as constructively as possible in discussion. For this portion of the process, it is suggested that you rely heavily upon 1) your own experience as a person who is different in some way from the most usual characteristics of congregational members, e.g., an older person, a member of an ethnic minority, a minority sexual orientation, or your experience as a member of a congregation that has membership or staff who happens to fall in one of these categories, and 2) your general knowledge of racism and prejudice to dispel myths, address concerns, and educate them to the facts as you understand them. Impart whatever information you can to them, in a friendly (and frank) give and take.

Please remember that we are trying to convince them to give warm welcome to persons outside of the categories with whom they traditionally associate, so be as nurturing, non-defensive, intelligent, and warm as you can be, particularly if the group is fortunate enough to have you representing one of these minorities yourself. Those of us who have done some of these workshops will tell you we have heard some amazing (even rude) things, but even the most hysterical racist ideas can be countered if done carefully and caringly.

Ask participants to take a few minutes to look at the posted sheets. Ask if there are any comments based on just looking at the information gathered from the group.

Then begin processing the "Concerns" and "Benefits" by noting concerns that occur in more than one category. These often include: Single issue advocacy, What will the community think? Will they be comfortable with us?

There may not be time to address all concerns in every category. Remember, to point out if there are a significant number of "no concerns/none" for any category. Pick the three or four issues that seem to be the "hot" ones for that congregation, and work them through. Then, if time permits, you can deal with one or more of the other concerns in each category

The discussion of their concerns and fears, as well as the benefits that might result from having a more members and staff who fit into one of the categories, will eventually wind down quite naturally.

Be aware that often the participants have very specific questions about the membership recruitment, growth, and hiring practices. As much as possible, refer such questions to the membership and personnel committees.

9. POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

It is important that the workshop not be a "one-shot" effort. It should be a step in an ongoing process.

Congregations often ask questions about moving forward in dealing with one or more of the social justice questions that have been discussed. Please leave with them website addresses (URLs) of resources on the CUC website, and assure them that further information and assistance is available from the CUC. You could mention the existence of the Racial and First Nations Equity Monitoring Group, and encourage them to visit the CUC website to find the member nearest them, or to consider joining.

http://cuc.ca/social_responsibility/index.htm

You may refer them to local groups and resources discovered during your research suggested at IX six, as well as invite comments from SRC and CUSJ members in the congregation.

A Unitarian interfaith and intercultural curriculum they might consider using as one option in continuing their exploration is Harold Rosen's "Rainbowmaking":

http://www.uua.org/families/fam_justice/rainbowmaking.html

If you feel the material is not too Christian for the particular congregation, you might call attention to the CCC Undoing Racism kit mentioned earlier:

<http://www.ccc-cce.ca/english/justice/racism.htm>>

10. CLOSING

One way of gaining feedback is to draw on a piece of newsprint a vertical line down the center, and title one half "positive" (or "+") and the other half "change" (or with the greek letter delta), and ask participants to give responses of positive things about the workshop and the facilitator's performance, as well as some things that could be changed to make the workshop better next time (either in the workshop design, or in the facilitation).

Emphasize the the workshop is a first step in what should be an ongoing process.

Thank people for participating, and wish them well in their efforts to be more inclusive and diverse in their membership.

Remind them that minority members feel comfortable in the congregation is not the only goal. They may wish to organize joint activities with ethnic organizations in their community such as musical events, art shows, or joint social events, as examples. If food is involved, remind them to check for dietary restrictions of the group.

Those ethnic cultural organizations may have benefits for their members which the congregation might not be able to replicate. Cooperation with such groups might be more fruitful in improving communications and relations, than attempting to attract members from them. Baha'i are usually open to joint efforts, particularly peace related ones. Reform and Reconstructionist Jewish synagogues often have fewer food restrictions than Conservative or Orthodox. In this time of tension, it is particularly important to reach out to Muslim groups.

If the congregation becomes aware of minority based social injustices in their community, they may wish to attempt to influence public opinion by letters to the editor and guest editorials written by the minister, and representations to public officials, undertaken in conjunction with their SRC.

Close with a short reading/benediction -- you may wish to gather the group in a circle for this. Here are two suggestions of appropriate readings from Singing the Living Tradition - #560 and #580.

=====
=====

Form For Use in Section IX Seven

PEOPLE OF COLOUR

Personal Concerns | Congregational Concerns | Benefits

PEOPLE OF COLOUR		
Personal Concerns	Congregational Concerns	Benefits

| |

| ETHNIC MINORITY MEMBERS |
Personal Concerns | Congregational Concerns | Benefits

| |

| FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE |
Personal Concerns | Congregational Concerns | Benefits

| |