Creating Safe Spaces for Scary Conversations

Restorative Practices as a Cultural Competency Tool

Gola Taraschi

Restorative Practices Consultant

Breakout Session for 12th World Conference
The International Institute for Restorative Practices
October 21 to 23 2009 Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Some Context For a Discussion on Diversity - Canada

- For the last 25 years, the labour force grew by approximately 226,000 people per year;

- In 2010, the labour force is projected to grow by only 42,000;

- In 2008, the first wave of "baby boomers" began to retire

- Projection for the coming decade:
  - For every 2 people retiring, there will be less than 1 person to take their place (Duxbury, Slides 1-6)

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Some More Context

- Canada's birth rate is below "replacement levels
- Aging population
- Reliance on skilled immigrants to build labour force (70 percent of growth in Canada's labour force in recent years)
- A dramatic increase in immigrants will still be needed
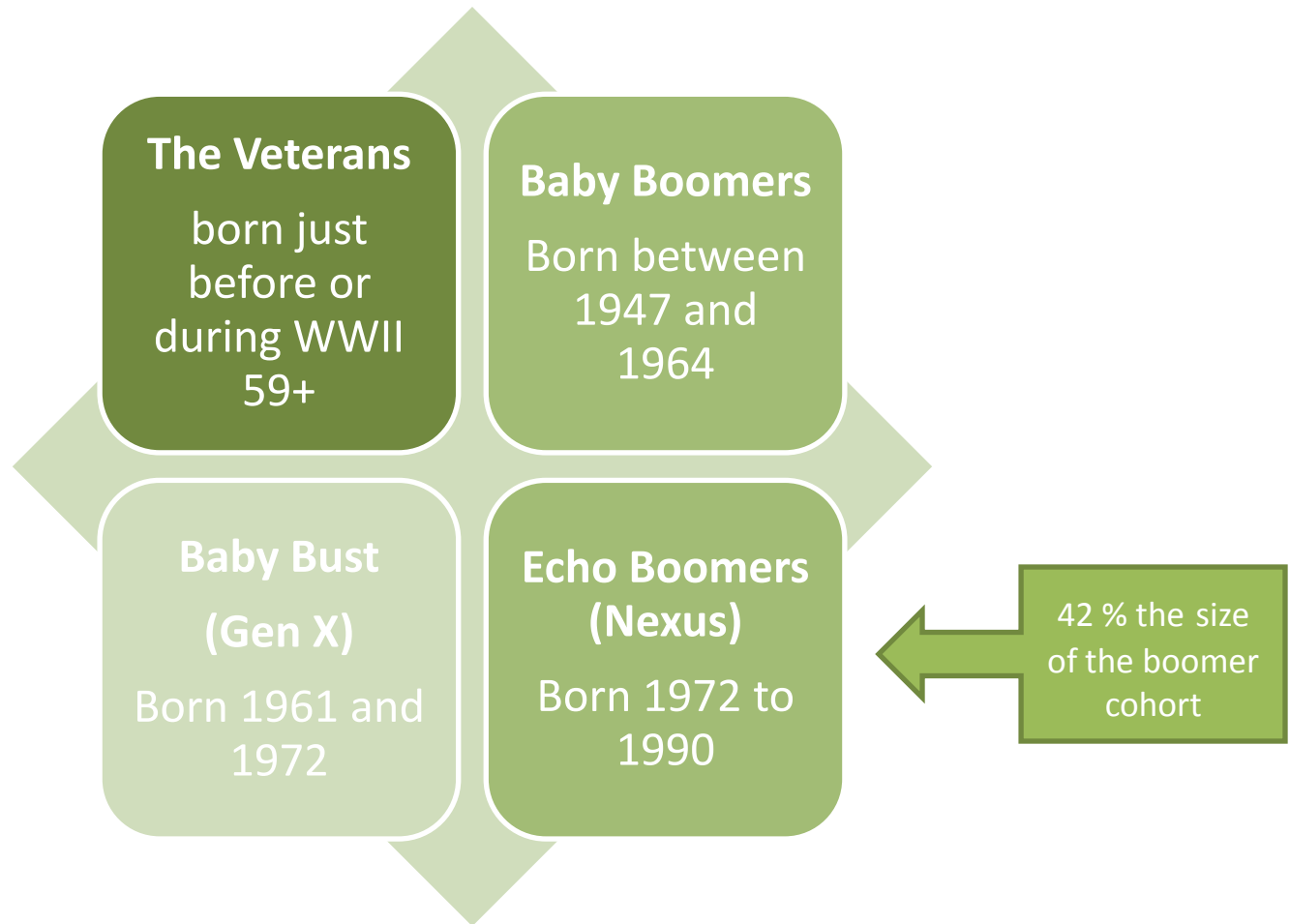- International competition for skilled labour

Even More Context

- Unusual Circumstances
  - **Four generations** in community
  - Why?
    - People are living longer
    - Shorter time span between generations
    - Workplaces - Workers are staying in the workforce or re-entering the workforce after they reach traditional retirement age

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Four Generations

The Veterans

born just before or during WWII 59+

Baby Boomers

Born between 1947 and 1964

Baby Bust

(Gen X)

Born 1961 and 1972

Echo Boomers (Nexus)

Born 1972 to 1990

42 % the size of the boomer cohort

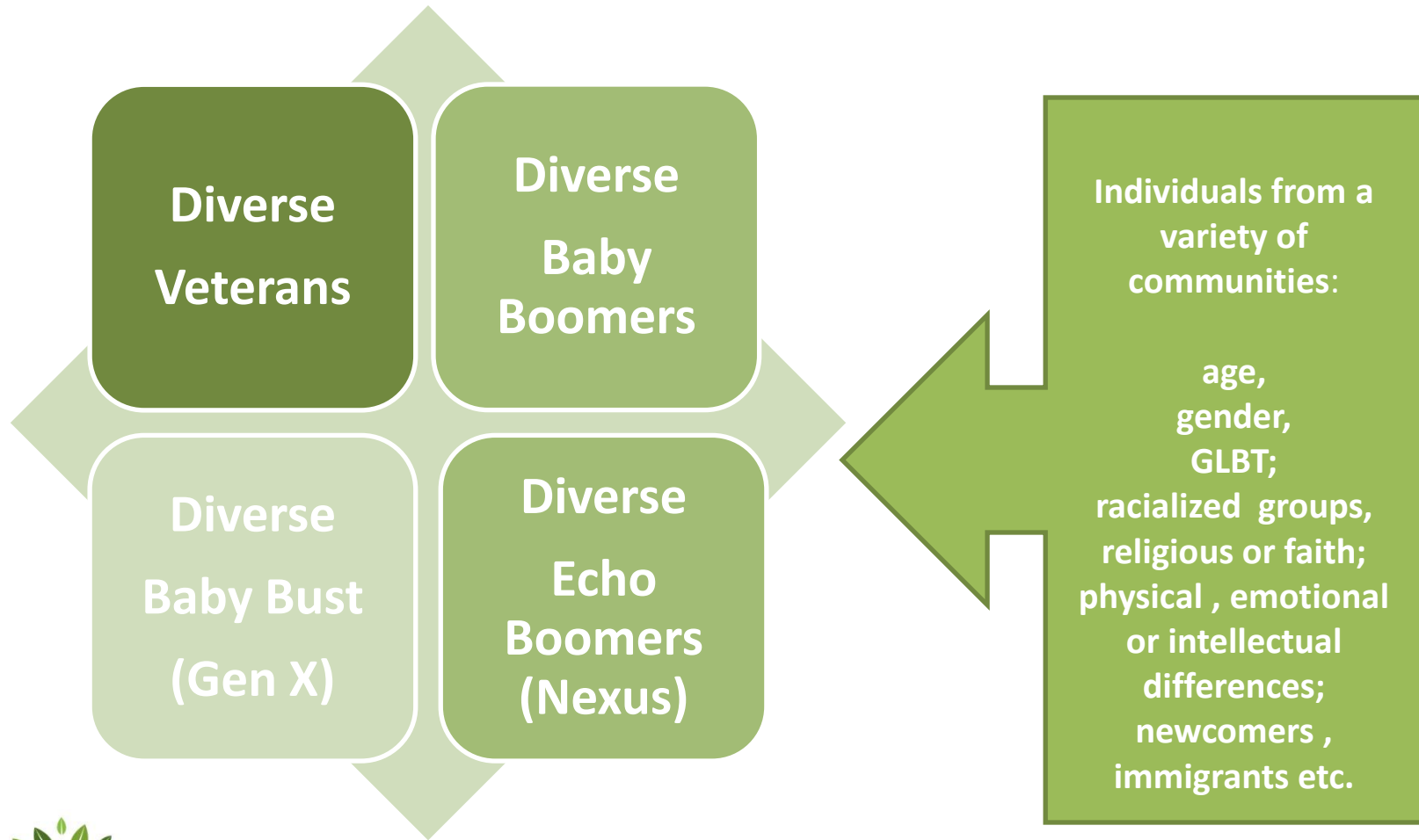Taraschi, IIRP World Conference , October 2009

Boiled Frogs and Free Spirits

- ## Clash of Values

  - **Veterans** – loyalty; dependability, persistence, wisdom and experience; authoritarian

  - **Baby Boomers** – workaholic; acceptance of stress, team oriented; importance of status & titles; demanding respect & sacrifice from subordinates;

  - **Gen X** - working within system; sacrifice personal life for advancement; need close supervision; desire for job security; insecure and need to be recognized;

  - **Nexus** – independence and autonomy; seek challenge and variety; entrepreneurial; distrust hierarchy and authority; lack of loyalty; unwilling to commit; work-life balance; fun and communal workplace

Diversity within Diversity

Diverse Veterans

Diverse Baby Boomers

Diverse Baby Bust (Gen X)

Diverse Echo Boomers (Nexus)

Individuals from a variety of communities:

age, gender, GLBT; racialized groups, religious or faith; physical , emotional or intellectual differences; newcomers , immigrants etc.

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Diversity – The Good News

- We are all different!

- We are each unique

- There is strength in being yourself

- There is value in being you

- The value of one person does not diminish the value of another

- We can learn from each other and accomplish more together

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Diversity -The Challenges

- People can be uncomfortable operating outside of their own comfort zone
  - Outside of what is familiar and known to them
- Sometimes, this discomfort causes us to seek out those who are like us and avoid those who are different
  - In our workplaces
  - Our families
  - Our neighbourhood
  - Our communities

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Diversity –More Challenges

- Result - People are not aware of the experiences of others
- Environmental Influences, values and beliefs
- Lack of social capital (connections) which are now prevalent in wider society is even greater between groups who are different
- Sometimes people feel unsure of what to do or say and so relationships are not as strong as they could be –**Fear**
  - Don't know what to say; Don't want to offend; fear of unknown

Social Role Valorization Theory

Wolfensberger

- if a person holds a **valued social role**, a person is highly likely to receive from society those good things in life that are available (or at least the opportunities for obtaining them).

- In other words, all sorts of good things are more apt to be given to a person who holds socially valued roles (based on the **resources and norms** of his/her society).
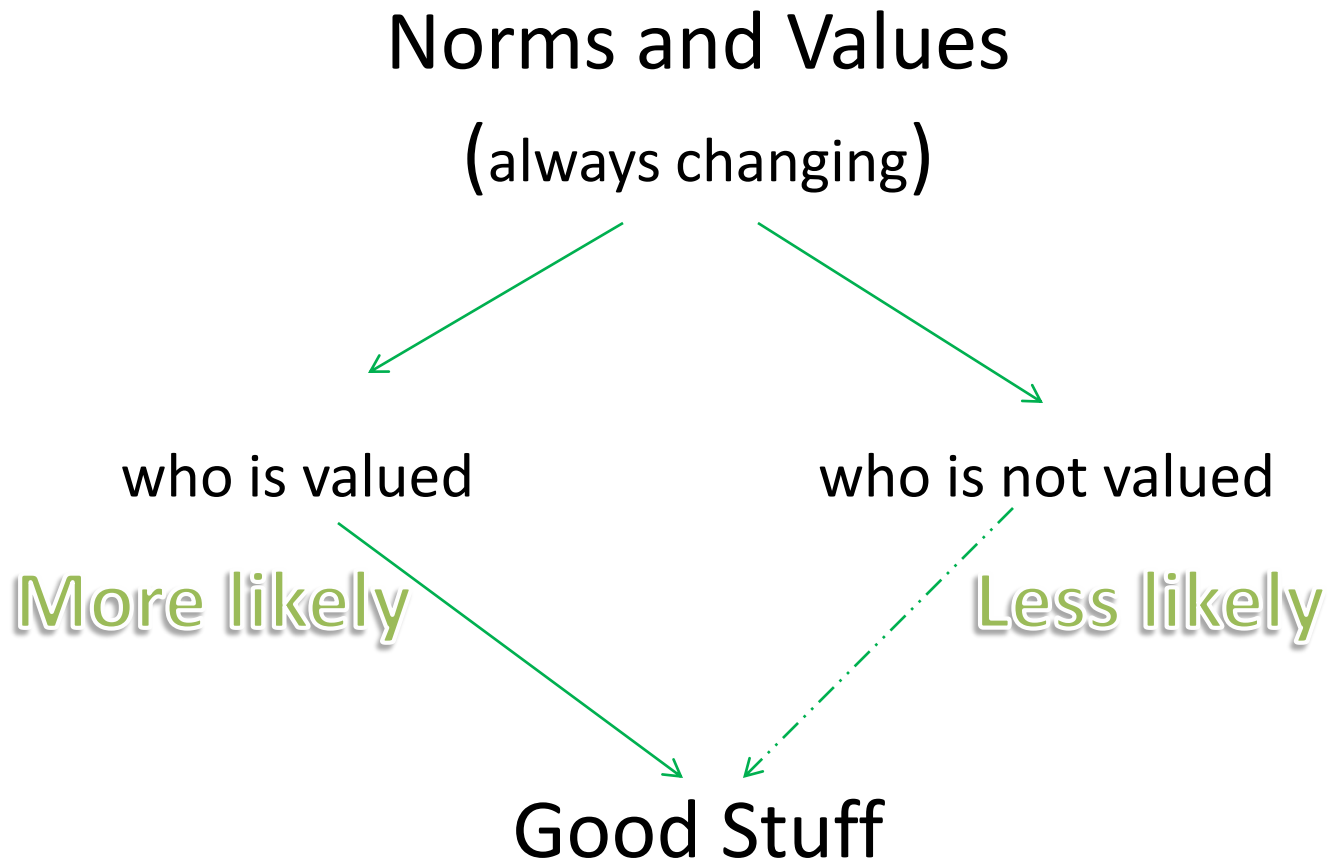
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What happens to those who are not valued?

- They become vulnerable
  - are therefore less likely to receive or have opportunities to receive the **"good stuff"** – i.e. clean water to drink, safe housing, educational/social opportunities etc.

A Dynamic Social Process

Norms and Values

(always changing)

who is valued   who is not valued

More likely   **Less likely**

Good Stuff

Social Exclusion

- **Social exclusion** relates to the **alienation** or **disenfranchisement** of certain people within a society. Anyone who deviates in any perceived way from the norm of a population can become subject to coarse or subtle forms of social exclusion – *wikipedia*.

Exclusion Can Set the Stage For Conflict

- Weakened relationships

- Fear and mistrust

- Uncertainty and discomfort

- Competing interests

- Adversarial atmosphere – "us and them"

- Lack of cohesion in community

- Some feeling like don't belong

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What can this look like?

- Intentional or unintentional exclusion of those who are different ("forgotten" invitations to functions; cliques form; etc);
- Bullying;
- Inequitable assignment of labour in workplace;
- High absenteeism / sick days / decreased productivity
- Tense or uncomfortable communication; "jokes"
- Gossip or harassment
- Hate crimes
- Stage set for war or genocide

Why is this a problem?

- Weakens communities;
- Strained and broken relationships;
- More instances of harm are likely to occur; more victimization;
- More experiences of injustice to particular communities;
- Internal and external oppression;
- Limiting of human potential
- Separation and Disconnection
- Declining Social Capital

Conflict – The Good News

- Social Conflict is a natural by-product of human beings in relationship with each other;

- We are not all the same – diversity

- It is not always destructive;

- When conflict is transformed, it can actually be a strengthening force in human relationships;

- CONFLICT IS HEALTHY and GOOD if it is TRANFORMED

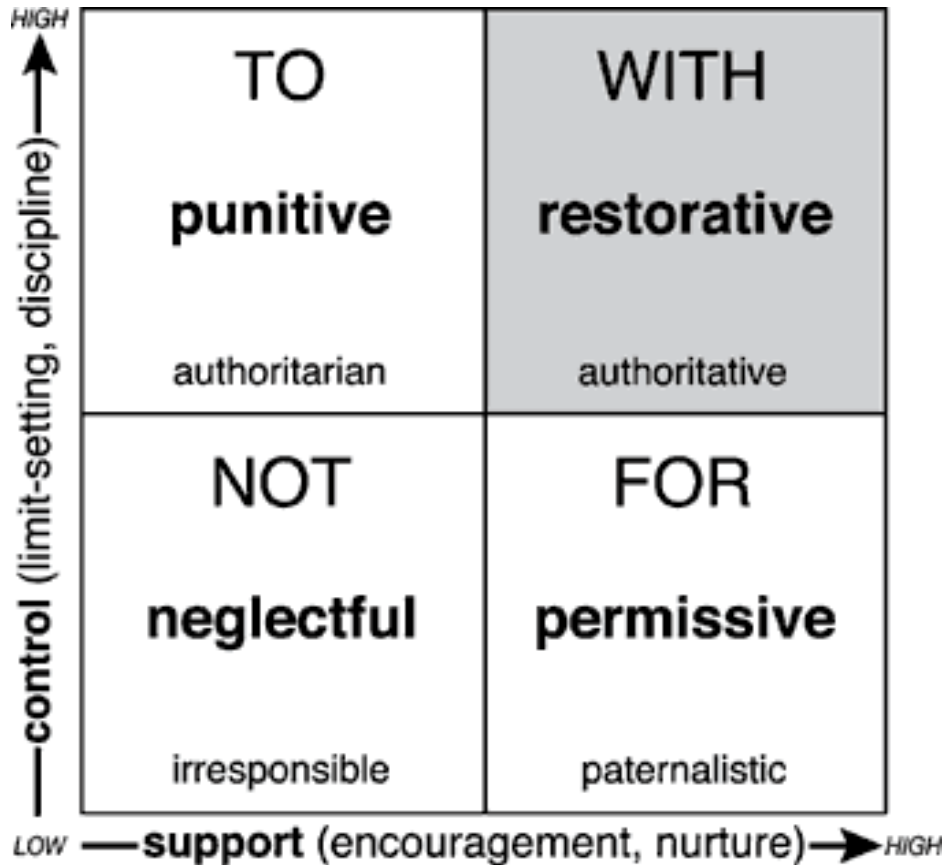Taraschi, IIRP World Conference , October 2009

Conventional Diversity Training

- Educational process – the individual
- "Come, learn and be corrected"
- Can be shaming and stigmatizing for all
- Adversarial
- Us and "You"
- Doing "To" rather than "With"
- Seeking transformation through shame and blame rather than by building a shared understanding

Social Discipline Window

International Institute for Restorative Practices (iirp.org)

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Cultural Competency

- Learning to operate effectively in a culture other than our own

- Four Components
  - **Awareness** – conscious of one's reaction to others who are different
  - **Attitude** – examine one's beliefs and values
  - **Knowledge** – knowing what is okay for others
  - **Skills** – verbal and non-verbal communication

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Restorative Practices

Build Social Capital

- make connections between and within social networks, families, communities, environment, build strengths and assets around people in need

Achieve Social Discipline

- create mechanisms that maintain social norms and behavioural boundaries (iirp.org)

A Tool in Cultural Competency

- Restorative Practices & Circles
- Foster relationships and build community
  - dialogue process that aims to build relationships as people address a common concern
  - The role of facilitator is to help people share experiences, ideas and information;
  - The goal is to increase everyone's understanding and awareness of an issue – to forge new perspectives
  - is an important way to help people solve difficult problems or transform conflict between adversaries
  - Transforming conflict = strengthening relationships

Lisa Schirch and David Campt, 2007

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Circles

- An important tool in restorative practices
- A way of bringing people together that promotes

    Listening and Hearing

    Equality - equal seating

    Everyone is an Expert

    Safety and Trust

    Shared Accountability and Ownership

    Builds connections and empathy through sharing

Debate vs Restorative Dialogue

Lisa Schirch and David Campt, 2007

Debate	Dialogue
Goal to win by affirming one's own view and discrediting others	Goal to learn from and understand differing perspectives
People listen to others and find flaws in their arguments	People listen to others and understand how their experiences shape their beliefs
People critique the experiences of others as invalid	People accept the experiences of others as real and valid
People appear determined not to change their views on an issue	People appear to be somewhat open to expanding their understanding of an issue
People speak on assumptions made about others positions and motivations	People speak primarily from their own experience and understanding
People oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong	People work towards common understanding
Strong emotions like anger are used to intimidate the other side	Strong emotions like anger or sadness are used when appropriate to convey the intensity of experience and belief

Elements of Restorative Dialogue

- A guided process

- An intention to learn and change

- Engaging Intellect

- Engaging Emotions

- Engaging Spirit

Restorative Practices

- Most critical function is to restore and build relationships
- If relationships can allow for the free expression of affect or emotion then they can create emotional bonds
- If we can create emotional bonds between diverse people, there should be a decrease in exclusion
- Relationships matter and good ones result in more frequent experiences of justice – **social justice & peace**

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Restorative Practices

- Help to process experiences of not being socially "valued" through the support of a "community of care";

- Offers a cultural learning opportunity for all; transmission of knowledge and skills;

- Reduces victimization and fall out
  - Antidote for shame and isolation and silencing
  - Offers acknowledgement and support
  - Reduces victimization and fall out

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Do "With" People

- **PROACTIVE**
  - Invite people to explore their differences in a restorative circle – training/seminar
  - Hold circles regularly (workplace, rec. centre) as way of building community and relationships – less likely for exclusion to occur

- **REACTIVE**
  - Hold restorative conference to address a hurt and allow everyone involved and affected to be heard and have a role in making things right

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A Good Question
To Open a Circle Dialogue

- Can you think of a time when you felt like an outsider?
  - What happened?
  - What was the hardest part of feeling that way?
  - What did you learn from the experience?

A Final Thought

Every war and every conflict
  Between human beings has happened
  Because of some disagreement about *names*.

It is such an unnecessary foolishness,
  Because just beyond the arguing
  There is a long table of companionship
  Set and waiting for us to sit down.

What is praised is one, so the praise is one too,
  Many jugs being poured into a huge basin.
  All races, all religions, all this singing, one song.

The differences are just illusion and vanity.
  Sunlight looks a little different
  On this wall than it does on that wall
  And a lot different on this other one,
  But it is still one light.

We have borrowed these clothes,
  These time-and-space personalities,
  From a light, and when we praise,
  We are pouring them back in.

RUMI

Open Dialogue

Resources

- "You, Me and Them: Dealing With Generational Differences in the Workplace", Dr Linda Duxbury, Professor, Sprott School of Business, Carleton University Ottawa; linda_duxbury@carleton.ca

- "An overview of Social Role Valorization Theory" Joe Osburn. Available online http://socialrolevalorization.com/resource/OSBURN_SRV.htm

- "Some of the universal 'Good Things of Life' which the implementation of SRV can be expected to make more accessible to devalued people", W. Wolfensberger, Thomas S and Caruso G. 1996, The International Social Role Valorization Journal/La Revue Internationale de la Valorisation des Roles Sociaux, 2 (2) 12-14.

- "Dialogue for Difficult Subjects: A Practical Hands On Guide" Lisa Schirch and David Campt, 2007, Good Books, Intercourse PA.

- "The Little Book of Circle Processes" Kay Pranis, 2005, Good Books, Intercourse PA.

- "Defining Conflict Transformation" John Paul Lederach, Restorative Justice Online, www.restorativejustice.org/resources/docs/lederach

- For more information, please contact:

  Gola Taraschi justgola@eastlink.ca tel Canada 902 219-2619

  http://www.linkedin.com/in/golataraschi