

**CPN Diversity Seminar #7**  
**Building Relationships with Local First Nations**  
**Notes from Activities and Resource Contacts**

## **Panel Presentation**

### **Suggestions from Panel Members:**

- Don't rely on phone or email to make contact with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations, pay a personal visit... if you don't get an answer the first time, keep knocking on the door!
- Recognize the long-term effects that colonialism and Residential Schools have had on Aboriginal peoples and that racism and negative stereotypes still abound in our society. Because of this history, be aware that organizations must earn the trust of 1<sup>st</sup> Nations.
- Recognize that we in the mainstream carry much privilege, and some of that has come at the expense of Aboriginal peoples.
- Be prepared to look inside ourselves to examine the stereotypes and biases we may carry
- A good ice-breaker when you meet a 1<sup>st</sup> Nations person is to ask "Where are you from?" This provides an opportunity for people to tell their story.
- Leave room for 1<sup>st</sup> Nations people to tell their stories – remember that their history is an oral, rather than written one.
- In Greater Victoria, when acknowledging that we are on 1<sup>st</sup> Nations Coast Salish territory, the correct term to use is the traditional territory of the Lekwungen people.
- Check out the First Voices website (<http://www.firstvoices.com/>) to learn about Aboriginal languages

## **Global Cafe Notes**

### **1. What efforts or interactions has your organization done in the past to build relationships with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations communities?**

- Many organizations begin meetings and events by respectfully acknowledging they are on the traditional territory of 1<sup>st</sup> Nations people
- Funding West Coast Challenge Youth Engagement
- Attended event at UVic to better understand 1<sup>st</sup> Nations challenges
- Royal Roads has full-time 1<sup>st</sup> Nations Liaison person
- Job Fair recruiting targeting 1<sup>st</sup> Nations
- Connecting with Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC)
- Connecting 1<sup>st</sup> Nations to volunteer program
- Provided workshop on volunteering, helped start relationship
- Partnering with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations to create a sustainable business model for medical marijuana
- Bringing Canadians For Compassion to Victoria
- Partnering with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations communities to develop health resources & education
- Participation in Idle No More to show support for those who are oppressed
- Becon Support Services has Welcome Signs in Group Homes in traditional languages

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**Global Cafe Notes: continued...**

**1. What efforts or interactions has your organization done in the past to build relationships with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations communities?**

- Royal Roads - full-time 1<sup>st</sup> Nations Liaison person
- Literacy Victoria:
  - Worked on the ALES program
  - Partnership with the VNFC CEER dept.
  - Participated in cultural awareness workshop at VNFC for LV volunteers
- Kardel Consulting
  - Has 1<sup>st</sup> Nations clients
  - Assisting 1<sup>st</sup> Nations to support people with disabilities
  - Working to hire 1<sup>st</sup> Nations employees
- Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL):
  - School outreach
  - Partnered to develop library at VNFC
  - Craigflower school & kindergarten visit & welcome
  - Partnered with Boys & Girls Club to offer anti-bullying workshop to adolescent girls & provide library cards
  - Displayed graphics/posters/books representing 1<sup>st</sup> Nations
  - Removed financial barrier for Aboriginal people to obtain a library card
  - Hoping to create and display plaque acknowledging library on traditional territory
  - Offers 1<sup>st</sup> Nations books and other resources for all age groups
- Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee
  - reaching out to other partners, possible 1<sup>st</sup> Nations membership
- Saanich PD
  - Drumming Workshop
  - “The Spirit Has No Colour” DVD
- Victoria PD
  - Rebuilding 1<sup>st</sup> Nations relationships by learning their needs and attempting to get to root of problems
  - Part of new Outreach Team to Aboriginal clients (713 Outreach)
- Dedicated Songhees & Esquimalt 1<sup>st</sup> Nations liaison officer (RCMP) with a satellite office in the Songhees Wellness Centre
- Workshop to help people develop strategies to address biased comments

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**Global Cafe Notes**

**1. What efforts or interactions has your organization done in the past to build relationships with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations communities?**

- Belfry Theatre:
  - offered programs by 1<sup>st</sup> Nations artists,
  - working to expand its diversity both in terms of performances, performers and audience
- Red Cross:
  - Hired 1<sup>st</sup> Nations individual in the role of Aboriginal Community Development
  - Walking the Prevention Circle
  - Facilitation to over 100 people discussing challenges and strengths and historic legacy of Residential Schools
  - Opening up dialogues on bullying
  - 5 day workshop on developing healthy relationships
  - Working with Aboriginal groups across the country
  - Building productive relationships by planning with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations and focusing on needs
    - E.g. First Aid for youth/elders and Preparedness Planning
- Vancity:
  - partnered with Songhees to finance the Welcome Centre
  - partnered with Shoreline Middle School to plant Camas
  - funded “Feasting For Change”
  - providing financial literacy – “Aboriginal Best program”
  - proactively seeking to hire members of the Aboriginal community
  - supported the Reconciliation Walk
  - developed very inclusive policies around working with diversity
- Greater Victoria School Districts:
  - Inform newcomer families about 1<sup>st</sup> Nations and coordinate meetups
  - Offer programs to educate about Aboriginal culture
- Indigenous Perspectives Society:
  - Partnering with Prov. Govt & ensuring true engagement of community members
  - Educating the mainstream public

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**Global Cafe Notes- continued**

**1. What efforts or interactions has your organization done in the past to build relationships with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations communities?**

- Community Living Victoria:
  - Family support program
  - Supporting some 1<sup>st</sup> Nations initiatives, but funding an issue as they are prevented from offering services to people living on Reserves
- UVic Child & Youth Care Program has learning about & working with indigenous people as part of the curriculum
- VIHA
  - Spend ½ day each week on Saanich Peninsula to meet with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Nations people part of VIHA workforce
  - Learn from current 1<sup>st</sup> Nations clients to help provide better service to others
- Communica
  - Teaches kids a creative toolkit for cultural competency and conflict engagement skills
  - Connects with Youth & Family counselors at Craigflower school and other key 1<sup>st</sup> Nations community members
  - Makes direct connection with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations for guidance
- Municipality of Saanich:
  - Built relationship with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations as part of Craigflower Bridge reconstruction
  - Working with Craigflower School to develop archives and a potential arts collaboration
  - Works with schools & VNFC to develop a Youth Strategy
- ICA:
  - Coordinating seminars such as this one
  - Dedicated to being an ally and helping to build bridges between communities
  - Coordinated an arts project focused on 1<sup>st</sup> Nations reconciliation
- City of Victoria
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Nations part of Official Community Plan
  - Has Protocols Officer
  - Formal relationship between local Chiefs and Mayor
  - Housing Program
  - Creating and displaying cultural markers (Signs of Lekwungen)
  - Has engaged a “Remains Sites” consultant
- The CRD is working to build relationships with 1st Nations – going to their “homes” and learning protocols

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**Global Cafe Notes**

**2. Going forward, how can your organization build relationships and/or become an ally with 1st Nations communities?**

- Respectfully acknowledging territory
- Knocking on their doors to invite participation/partnering
- Provide information to public on 1<sup>st</sup> Nations events
  - Make distribution lists available to notify public
- Accept offers to participate in events
- Check out First Voices website & app
- Provide plant knowledge cards (and link to distribution list)
- Back to school picnic
- Partner with VNFC
- Display maps of 1<sup>st</sup> Nations territory and languages
- Collaborate and share resources
- Develop more awareness of traditions and diversity of 1<sup>st</sup> nations
- Attend events as a participant, not as a spectator
- Create an Educational Council and build relationships
- Approach with gifts and food
- Ensure the partnership is in 1<sup>st</sup> Nations best interest & not “your way”
- Asking open-ended questions
- Assist with language revitalization
- Approach with a “spirit of giving”
- Knock on doors, be curious, ask questions
- Examine our own stereotypes and prejudices
- We’re going to try to break down walls and look for opportunities for true communication – look to build alliances by searching out common interests
- Invite 1<sup>st</sup> Nations to participate in our story-telling groups
- Look for the possibility of creating a Transformation Theatre project involving 1<sup>st</sup> Nations communities
- The rhythm and cadence of our speech and thoughts is different from that of 1<sup>st</sup> Nations – I’m going to try to fit mine more to theirs when communicating
- Watch, listen, think and be aware that you’re in someone else’s home!

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**Global Cafe Notes- continued**

**2. Going forward, how can your organization build relationships and/or become an ally with 1st Nations communities?**

- Be genuine – authentically curious!
- Be brave, humble, respectful and honest and willing to learn from our mistakes
- Spirit to Spirit connection to help build trust
- Educate ourselves about the impact of colonization, Residential Schools and Indian Act
- Listen, show up and bear witness
- Take steps to understand 1<sup>st</sup> Nations protocols and to learn who to connect with and the best method
  - Try to ensure not offending anyone or stepping on their toes
  - Learn what it means to be an ally
- Create initiatives to build “Block Watch”, resident organizations, “get to know your neighbour” opportunities
- Goal to engage 1<sup>st</sup> Nations in developing business programs
- Seek out funding (grants, govt, private) that will support organizations working with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations
- Work with service providers on effective harm reduction programs