

Minutes of the Girl Guides of Canada, Fraser Skies Area
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, October 4th, 2017

Area Centre; 7 pm

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Marion Weir called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and thanked everyone for coming out. She introduced the Committee Secretary, Joanne Senetza, and invited participants to do a quick round of introductions, including name, district and motivation for involvement:

- Teresa from Chilliwack – interested in topic;
- Katherine from Peninsula – background in Aboriginal education and personal interest;
- Nancy from Telegraph Trail – familiar with these topics in high school setting;
- Lisa from Abbotsford – employed with Fraser Health, working with South Asian and Indigenous people;
- Tracy from Willoughby – strong feelings about exclusion of allergies, LGBT advocacy, appointed as District Diversity/Inclusion Adviser;
- Sheri from Langley Valley – feels diversity/inclusivity should be a non-issue;
- Bev from Ottergrove (also working in North Delta) – disappointment in experiencing girls being withdrawn due to wording in songs;
- Cindy from Clover Ridge / Area PR adviser – belief in what should happen, willing to work towards improvements;
- Tori from Kwantlen – topic is relevant and interesting, District has disadvantaged neighbourhoods, feels we should be championing those in need.
- Marion as Area Co-Commissioner – familiarity from background as a high school teacher.

2. Respect Activity:

Marion asked the committee to spend about 10 minutes in small group discussions to consider the following questions:

What does it mean to you to “show respect”?
How do you show respect to others?

Committee members reported back:

- Stopping and listening when others are talking
- Listening without judgement
- Not making assumptions
- Attempting to use appropriate language for the intended audience (i.e. so the person you are communicating with will understand).

- Respect definition/notions come from environment, parents, work environment
- Respect has different interpretation at different ages (i.e. teenagers) – up to individual
- People want to be treated with respect and feel respected, even if we don't know what that involves.
- Some individuals don't have any knowledge of what respect is.
- Recognition of volunteerism
- Treating girls as individuals

Marion then asked “*Is respect in danger in Guiding?*”

- Probably – this is a sad statement, but may relate to society as a whole.
- Girls tend to be respectful.
- In general, there are way more difficulties between adults, rather than between girls and adults.
- There are expectations for others to bend to meet the other individual's views.
- Respect can be a condition or expectation – when you set up the structure at the outset, by making it important to all parties – girls, parents, other Guiders.
- Many see increasing amount of disrespect in adults in Guiding. There isn't an easy solution to this. Although conflict resolution training is available, it is optional.
- These are the kind of conversations we should be having in our Districts – a safe environment to share ideas.

We are really starting at the beginning of things again – and will begin training Guiders, developing ideas and preparing Guiders to deal with diverse groups.

3. *Why do we want girls to experience Guiding?*

In the same small groups, committee members were asked to present ten reasons why we want more girls:

- Variety of activities that they may not get elsewhere – camping, lighting matches!
- Leadership skills
- Empowerment – confidence building
- Flexibility
- Female role models / connections
- Camaraderie
- Safe space

Why do we want girls? What can we offer them?

Evidence shows that cultures that elevate girls through education and leadership result in improvements in society in general.

We don't talk about this in Districts and we don't track it very well.

It's not that Guiding doesn't exist elsewhere – it's around the world, but GGC doesn't meet the needs of new Canadians. Often in other countries, Guiding based in schools or run as an after-school program.

4. Area Goals:

Refer to the handout detailing the two goals for Fraser Skies Area for 2017-18

Goal #1: Sisterhood of Guiding – Quality of Delivery!

Goal #2: Explore Traditional Roots, present and future skills to enhance retention!

5. National Strategic Priorities:

These were sent out in draft form from GGC National to Provincial Councils. Each province was to decide on one or two priorities to work on. Fraser Skies Area opted to work on diversity and inclusion. The Area Commissioners participated in a conference call with National – and realized that they really wanted the 'business plan' model. We want to develop something to look at our Area, identify where we can work, educate guiders/leaders and begin preparing them with resources and ideas. For example, we have a large indigenous population (largest group is in Surrey) –and we know they are not represented in Guiding. We need to explore the reasons why they don't come and look at what we can do for that population.

Marion noted that in Vancouver, they had some success with after school groups with Muslim community and have established a good rapport in the Asian community – but that these initiatives have all gone by the wayside.

Part of our issue is that we just don't know how many diverse groups we have within Guiding presently. How many Asian girls? How many special needs? How many transgender/LGBTQ? While we can't directly ask anyone to self-identify, we should be gathering anecdotal information from Unit Guiders to gain greater understanding.

We need to ensure we are enforcing the GGC Code of Conduct among adult volunteers; we have sometimes turned a blind eye to inappropriate behaviours. Volunteers do need to be held accountable and our public image is important. Personal beliefs should not/cannot be forced on others.

In general, as Canadians and as women we are very polite – there is a desire to fit in, so we can be non-confrontational but still uncomfortable about the way issues are handled.

A question was raised about whether we are acknowledging traditional lands... at the beginning of ceremonies and events, as this is important in offering respect.

There needs to be more understanding around the use of religious facilities – often these are simply the only affordable options.

6. Bias Awareness/Equity Training Module:

National has provided this training module to help recognize and deal with 'isms'

- Ableism - Developmental/emotional/physical/psychiatric disability – unfortunately, there is little to no support from province/national
- Ageism – excluding girls/adults based on age; rigidity of system in program age groups
- Classism – socio-economic diversity; subsidies are offered, but often those in need are not even joining; issues exist around no transportation to unit meetings as there is no transit in some communities
- Faithism – religion, creed or lack thereof
- Heterosexism – sexual orientation
- Lookism – physical appearance
- Racism – skin colour, ethnicity, culture, nationality, religion or language
- Sexism – sex or gender identity

There was a request for sharing of information / resources: Can a page be added to the website for 'classifieds' (available resources for units and girls) and also to share ideas for inclusivity and diversity within units?

7. Discussion around the Goal and Purpose of this committee:

Committee members put forward the following ideas and comments:

- It's important to be open and allow girls to let you know if you've done something to hurt or offended them
- Respect what the girls have done – by acknowledging that they've showed up even if they don't come with all the things you asked for.
- Online registration means parents don't know anything about leaders before showing up.
- Appreciative inquiry – contact from District Commissioner, to determine what is the best fit for each girl. Often parents are more concerned about what night the meeting happens. Or where her friends are going.
- We need to look at training leaders to get to know their girls
- DC's should be getting to know their Guiders
- Some leaders may have limited life experiences and realities and can experience culture shock and not know how to respond.

Marion reminded participants that there was a letter issued (in handouts) describing the role and purpose of the committee.

Lisa shared that data for our Area (i.e., socio-economic breakdown, cultural groups, etc.) is available on the Fraser Health website.

- Participants were encouraged to look for resources out there
 - Native Friendship Centre

- South Asian Resource Centre
 - FNEC
 - School Boards
 - Cultural safety training – PHSA may share with others.
- To find value statements and commonalities that can be beneficial to all. We need to look at our adult members – get them in place or educate existing ones.
 - We are not moving to initiatives at this time – just talking, exploring, training adults, finding out what they need.
 - When we are ready for pilot projects, these should be measurable.
 - First we need to know what our Guiders think and where they are at.

Marion reviewed the objectives of the committee. Moving forward, we need to look at what we are doing next. Recruitment or education? Where do we go from here?

8. Where do we begin?

- With conversations in our Districts.
- Bias Awareness training at Area Retreat – almost all districts are represented
- What do we have now? Is there representation from different races? Indigenous? Ask questions of Unit Guiders. Are there girls with self-worth issues? Disabilities? (Behavioural or physical?) Ageism? Faith issues? Socio-economic concerns? Hidden poverty in wealthy Districts?
- Identifying barriers.
 - Limitations based on volunteer time

We are fortunate to have Cindy as our PR person for Area – we need to make Guiding more visible in the Area – we recently attended a Job Fair and Festival (which got rained out).

If you have festivals or job sharing events in your District, please let Cindy know and we will put them on our radar. Not for the purpose of recruiting necessarily, just being visible.

Opportunities include:

- Be You Challenge, for girls aged 7-15 – events in the malls (recent event held at Sevenoaks)
- International Women’s Day – March 8th

Marion encouraged committee members to talk within their Districts, and come back with information. Talk to your DC and be positive!

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017 – 7pm Area Centre