

Summary of Diversity Workshop: Saturday, October 30, 1999

Workshop Facilitators: Betty Baxter and Sadie Kuehn

VWHC members present: Anna-Lisa, Kim, Caryn, Hana, Sylvia, Angela, and Cathy

Format of the Workshop:

Introductory Round and Agreement of Agenda
Diversity Bingo
Our Personal Herstory Time-lines
Break
Defining Key Words
Building Alliances
Lunch
Self-imagining
Challenges/Fears Regarding Diversity in Organization
Next Steps
Closing Round/Evaluation

Major issues we discussed were:

1. Definition of Key Terms (group work):

- a) Diversity - embracing a variety of persons and all they bring with them
 - a mosaic; a blend
 - awareness and respect for others
- b) Social Change - change the way a community, family, and/or group is/are
 - is both a process and the results
- c) Collective – working together in solidarity (working *with*, rather than *for*)
 - the converging of ideas, with respect for and equality given to all contributions

2. Building Alliances:

- a) Key Motivators:
 - Our definition of alliance is that it is not one voice but a collection of voices
 - VWHC's goal is to mirror the community of women in BC
 - the alliance of women can represent issues and concerns collectively
 - we can provide comfort and support for one another, as there is strength in numbers. We can also share our stories, ideas, knowledge, and awareness.
- b) Steps to Alliance Building:
 - report back to monthly Collective meetings
 - participate in training offered by other community groups, as well as community events such as fairs, etc.
 - take what we learn back into the community
 - use the collective decision making process and make info about the Collective more accessible to women in the community
 - CHA

3. Discussing the reality of our lives:

- we have many commitments: family, other jobs, and school, for example
- we experience varying degrees of stress but don't get enough stress reduction
- we are too busy. Our schedules outside of the Collective (external controls) affect how much time we can commit to working here
- we often feel guilty that we aren't giving more time and energy to the Collective
- we feel alone, but we are connected
- we are frustrated by the social system
- BC transit takes up a considerable part of our day and our experiences with it affect our lives (e.g. racism, tiredness, frustration, scheduling)
- all of the above often drain our energy and leave us feeling unproductive

4. What does VWHC "look" like?

- young
- caucasian
- educated
- middle class (even though we don't believe we are)
- affluent
- welcoming

5. What are our fears regarding change?

- the unknown
- financial constraints
- the amount of energy some of these changes require
- complacency
- individual personalities

6. How do we address these fears?

- more workshops such as this one
- learn more about the Collective's herstory
- move the Collective east
- share our fears with one another
- peer counseling
- recruit more volunteers
- our hiring process: hire more women when we are able to
- improve our communication and training approaches

7. What are our supports?

- the VWHC
- friends and families
- VWHC's employees
- our communities
- the solidarity committee

7. What are the next steps we can take?

- address these fears
- improve communication
- have one big meeting (i.e. info centre meeting) where we can work together to increase communication
- each of us can pass what we've learned today on to others, here and outside of the Collective
- help empower others to be able to come to more workshops
- take our energy from the Collective out into the community