YouthAction
NORTHERN IRELAND
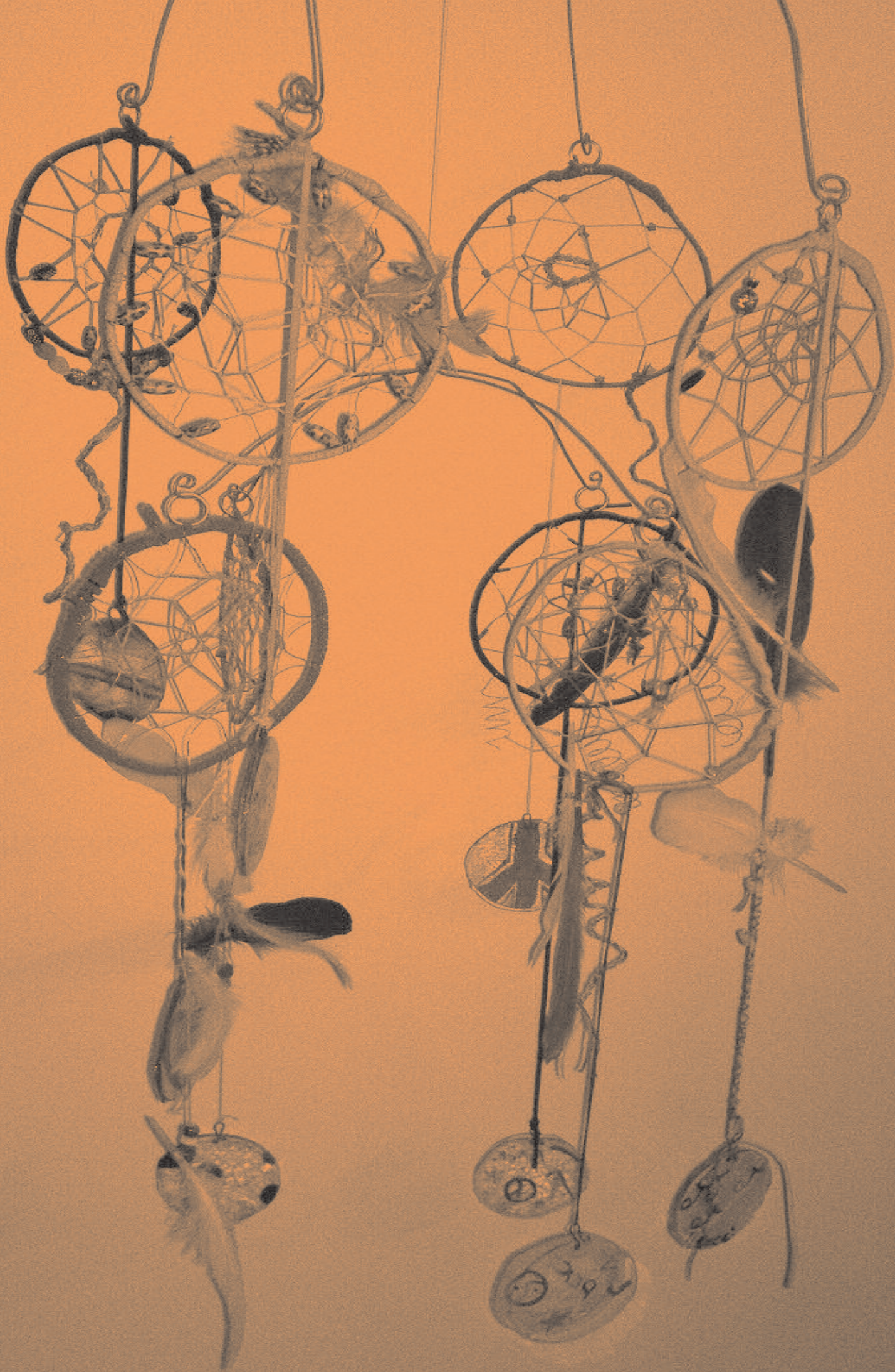65 YEARS

The role of youth work in supporting Inter-culturalism

This paper has been developed from a youth work seminar focussing on inter-culturalism in youth work in November 2009. This was presented by YouthAction Northern Ireland in partnership with the University of Southampton and the Newry and Mourne Youth Work Strategy Partnership. The paper has evolved from issues emerging in the Newry and Mourne area of Northern Ireland as well as that of Louth in the Republic of Ireland. The paper reflects key discussions and presentations from the seminar. It provides a theoretical and global framework in terms of focussing on themes such as separation, immigration and interculturalism. From a local perspective the paper recognises the policy environment, key statistics and qualitative findings, as well as youth work practice issues and models of practice developed by YouthAction Northern Ireland.

Dr Alan Grattan, University of Southampton & Martin Mc Mullan,
YouthAction Northern Ireland
2010

"Young people are keen to build relationships across different backgrounds but often do not have the opportunity to do so or lack the tools to actively challenge racist attitudes among their peers. Formal and non-formal approaches need to consider how they work with young people from minority ethnic communities and with indigenous young people to challenge their attitudes and perceptions of one another. We need to move beyond a 'culture of avoidance' to creating opportunities which focus on meaningful conversations and mutually respectful encounters. Our practices need to be targeting young people from minority ethnic communities and recognising that this is not a temporary phenomenon but a key element to inclusive youth work practices. Inclusive practice should seek to work with all young people and communicate with all stakeholders - considering a diversity of expectations, viewpoints and attitudes."

(Martin McMullan, YouthAction N.I., Nov 2009)

Interculturalism:

In terms of interculturalism, this paper understands this to translate as an inherent openness to be exposed to the culture of the "other" in which there is meaningful exchanges and understanding between cultural groups within a society. It is part of a humanist approach which adopts a multi-faceted approach which is fully embedded into all areas of policy including health, education and employment. Rather than it being about cultural assimilation in which a minority group gradually adapts to the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture or often imposing majority, it is about enhanced fusion between commonalities while recognising that differences remain which make up the subcultures of society. Interculturalism also recognises the separation and segregation between cultural differences and identities associated with the sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland. (See Grattan, 2007a, 2007b, 2008; McMullan, McShane & Grattan, 2006)

Minority ethnic and indigenous communities:

Minority ethnic refers to group whose ethnicity is distinct from that of the majority of the population {ethnicity means shared characteristics such as culture, language, religion and tradition which form part of your identity}.

Indigenous communities are known as an ethnic group of people who inhabit a geographic region with which they have the earliest known historical connection, alongside migrants which have populated the region and which are greater in number. These can also be referred to as established and emerging communities.

The global picture

"Dialogue between cultures, the oldest and most fundamental mode of democratic conversation, is an antidote to rejection and violence. Its objective is to enable us to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world, to develop a sense of community and belonging." (Council of Europe White Paper on 'Intercultural Dialogue' 2008)

Our cultural environment is changing rapidly and becoming more diversified; as such cultural diversity brings with it new social and political challenges. In essence no society, community or individual can escape the processes of globalisation and its consequences. Youth work responses need to consider the impacts of 'globalisation' at the local level and how young people's lived and daily realities, and their attitudes, choices and behaviours can be affected by these.

Paradoxically, while the world is increasingly interdependent it is also increasingly economically, ideologically, politically, socially and culturally divided. Events such as the ending of the 'Cold War'; the birth of new nation-states (especially in Eastern Europe); the expansion of the European Union; the relaxation of borders; the increased movement of migrant labour, the attacks on the USA, Spain and UK; the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and the recent global economic 'meltdown', political crisis all affect the local responses and attitudes. (See Grattan, 2007a, 2008, 2009; Grattan, McMullan & Zhunich, 2009)

"the transition to the 21st century is characterised by two simultaneous trends; global political and economic integration processes and national disintegration with broad (in)security implications." (Conteh-Morgan, 2001)

The consequence of rapid changes outside control of ordinary people brings sense of insecurity. The shifting realities at global level percolates into everyday life at local, community and individual levels; *"in a fast changing and 'runaway world' increasingly individuals search for a sense of security in an insecure world."* (Grattan, 2008)

This sense of insecurity often results in reversion to the 'known' and the 'safe'; the community. In such circumstances often society is faced with the paradox of increased intra communal cohesion and increased inter communal segregation. Under these conditions potential for communal segregation and separation intensifies, further entrenching emotions of hatred and fear based upon mutual suspicion, prejudice, distrust and lack of understanding of the 'other'. (Grattan, 2008) Often negative social responses tinged with nationalism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia result – directed against those perceived to be to 'blame' for bringing sense of uncertainty and insecurity – the 'other', the 'outsider' – the migrant worker, their families and asylum seeker. (McGhee, 2007)

"the prejudice and resultant negative actions that follow are often legitimised by the individual and community as being in defence of their tradition, culture, identity and way of life." (Grattan, 2007)

However:
"Shutting the door on a diverse environment can offer only illusory security. A retreat into the apparently reassuring comforts of an exclusive community may lead to a stifling conformism." (Council of Europe, 2008)

European Policy:

The Council of Europe 118th Ministerial Session (2008) launched the 'White Paper on Inter-culturalism' which called for "promotion of intercultural dialogue, mutual respect and understanding." Intercultural dialogue has thus emerged as a primary political and policy issue within the European Union.

The European Commission (2008) identify the following as 2 key priorities: **EDUCATION (formal & informal)** – as a means to provide basis for understanding and respecting diversity and **YOUTH PROGRAMMES** – as a means to facilitate practical experience of intercultural dialogue.

The European Commission's *'4 Step Strategy'* vision calls for organisations and non-governmental organisation's to work together in this '4 Step' approach:

1. **Mapping Roads** – identify exclusion or discriminatory practices and develop plans to improve conditions for intercultural processes to take place

2. **Breaking Down Walls** – remove barriers to equality and fight against prejudice, racism and stereotypes – include, listen and respond to the 'other'

3. **Building Bridges** – develop intercultural skills through educational programmes; encourage and equip individuals with the tools to engage in intercultural dialogue processes

4. **Sharing Spaces** – create spaces where ideas, experiences and beliefs can be respectfully exchanged – where interactive communication can freely flow.

Northern Ireland and the border counties:

Since the 1998 'Good Friday/Belfast Agreement' Northern Ireland has continued to change and with this is experiencing increased cultural diversity; for many this is a new social phenomenon. However, with the advent of the 'peace process' we have witnessed a 'shifting prejudice' in Northern Ireland and the border regions. Hate and racially motivated crimes in some areas increased by 874 per cent, out-stripping reported sectarian incidents for the first time. (PSNI, 2006) Hatred and prejudice once reserved purely for Protestant and Catholic are now directed towards the new 'other'. (Grattan, 2007a) In the wake of the highly publicised racist attacks in Belfast in June 2009, Evelyn Collins (Chief Executive) Equality Commission commented;

"The attacks over the past few days which have forced a number of Romanian families to leave their homes… are a grim reflection of the persistence of racial prejudice within our society."

The Equality Commission research (24 June 2009) shows an apparent rise in Northern Ireland of negative views towards a range of people as neighbours, work colleagues and family members

- 51% cited that they would mind a little or a lot having a Traveller as a neighbour (10% more than in 2005)

- 23% say they would have the same problem with a migrant worker

Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner commented:

"The results of the survey highlight the breadth of work which remains to be done in order to effectively change perceptions and attitudes towards citizens in Northern Ireland."

According to the 2006/2007 PSNI reports on racial and sectarian incidents and crimes - the number of recorded sectarian incidents only decreased by 0.4% (despite the "supposed decrease" in sectarianism) while racist incidents increased by 11.9%. All reported crimes in both categories included assaults, criminal damage and intimidation. (Cathy Willis, Youth Initiatives Culture Crosslinks project 2007). Cathy Willis in 'Made in the North' (2007) notes that sectarianism and racism are rooted in the same spirit:

- one of fear – losing one's identity and having their beliefs threatened, fear of the unknown, fear of exclusion

- lack of knowledge and understanding

- the need to be in control – power over others

- a sense of superiority and self-pride – people who set themselves above others (I/we are better than them)

Thus we can identify how Northern Ireland has been deeply rooted in a realm of hostility and violence in which people have sought separation for safety and in turn shared spaces and understanding have significantly decreased. Experiences of the last 40 years means that Northern Ireland has a strong tradition in building visible and invisible barriers. For young people this leads to limited opportunities in relation to education, health, mobility and building new relationships. It manifests itself further through distrust, prejudice, suspicion, hate, anger, resentment, intolerance, verbal abuse and violence. This is one significant factor in how racism and xenophobia (exaggerated or abnormal fear of strangers or foreigners) can escalate. Diversity often leads to segregation and thus we need to question how we can build a more integrated and cohesive society. While young people are the visible manifestation of conflict, prejudice, hatred, fear and violence – they are also the catalysts for change.

Young people:

In any conflict situation young people tend to be in the forefront as both perpetrators and victims. Issues, fears, anxieties and aspirations facing young people in Northern Ireland are similar to young people elsewhere in Europe. Young people across Europe are concerned

about their future, socio-economic position, community, identity, environment and everyday well-being. They are also similar to those of the 'other' young people who share the same space that is Northern Ireland; irrespective of tradition, race, ethnicity or culture.

In the Young Life and Times (YLT) survey 2008 (Queens University) 76% of respondents reported that they had had contact with people from minority ethnic groups – mostly through other students in school (80% saying this), going out (27%) and part-time jobs (25%). The survey also noted that 7% of respondents said they felt unfavourable towards minority ethnic groups, 36% felt favourable and 50% felt neither way. Such attitudes among young people have often been born from parental or adult attitudes and prejudices which young people in turn have adopted.

i. Numbers of young people under 25yrs migrating to NI

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) estimated that between 2006 /2007, 5218 (64%) of the total 8037 migrating to Northern Ireland were young people under the age of 25yrs. They also note that of 3660 females migrating to Northern Ireland, 2437 of these are young women under the age of 25yrs (63%) and that of 4377 males migrating to Northern Ireland 2781 of these are young men under the age of 25yrs (66%)

These statistics indicate that our practices need to be targeting young people from minority ethnic communities and recognising that this is not a temporary phenomenon but a key element to our inclusive practices.

ii. The Southern region of Northern Ireland (incorporating Newry, Mourne and Armagh)

The 'Southern Investing for Health Partnership Oct 2009 Migrant population: facts and figures' show that in 2008/09 across Southern area schools, there were 814 **post-primary** school children who did not speak English as their first language. (2.6% of the total post-primary school children within Southern area schools) – a rise from 2.1% in 2007/08. The **post-primary** pupils who do not speak English as a first language tended to comprise of: 36% speaking Polish, 13% Lithuanian, 12% Cantonese, and 8% Portuguese. Other languages included: Filipino, Slovakian & Latvian.

In the estimated Net International Migration statistics between July 2004 – June 2007 Newry/Mourne was recorded 3rd in totals of the amounts of inward migration (2,981 over 3 years) - Dungannon being first and Belfast second.

Implications for youth work:

"Youth Work has its part to play in supporting our young people to gain skills, knowledge and confidence. They then can use these toward helping build fair and just communities concerned with civil rights, equality of opportunity and able to accept and welcome differences in people. Youth work aims to help young people develop the intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to participate as active citizens and to flourish as individuals in a diverse, unequal and changing society." (Shaping the future of the Youth Service, Youth Service Sectoral Partnership Group, October 2009)

Youth work both influences policy and takes it lead from wider local, regional and European policies. The Good Friday Agreement, through the Northern Ireland Act (Section 75 NI Act 1998), requires all public bodies to regularly review how they are promoting equality of opportunity in relation to nine key categories. This commitment is recognised as being central to the values of the youth sector and being highlighted within the Northern Ireland Youth Work Strategy. The youth sector further reflects the programme for Government (2008-2011) which aims to promote tolerance, inclusion and health and well-being. The sector has become more explicit in its commitment and contribution to addressing community relations and working with young people through educational processes which encourage the development of mutual understanding and promote recognition of, and respect for, cultural diversity. The sectoral 'JEDI' (Joined in Equity Diversity and Interdependence) initiative has progressed the promotion of community relations and diversity within the youth service ultimately supporting difference and improved relations practices among youth workers and managers in the sector. The ever-increasing significance and relevance of international youth work and policy, as the process of globalisation and international interdependence deepens, heightens the need to develop increased intercultural aptitudes among young people and youth workers, to tackle growing issues such as diversity, racism and xenophobia.

The government consultation on 'A shared future' policy and 'Cohesion, Sharing and Integration for a Shared and Better Future' and the Department of Education new Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education policy (C.R.E.D.) provides an opportunity for the youth sector to highlight, promote and develop its vital role in contributing to good relations in Northern Ireland based on traditional community relations and race. The Department of Education, which is responsible for the youth service in Northern Ireland prioritise the need for all young people to reach the highest possible standards of educational achievement that will give them a secure foundation for lifelong learning and

employment; and develop the values and attitudes appropriate to citizenship in an inclusive society. The 'Strategy for the delivery of youth work in N.I.' (2005-2008) and Priorities for Youth (2009) emphasise the delivery of effective inclusive youth work.

YouthNet Inclusion Initiative (2009) through focus groups has noted that schools, communities and youth initiatives are often ill equipped to address issues pertaining to racism and xenophobia. For Northern Ireland to be recognised as a confident, prepared, culturally aware, outward and forward looking region, young people and those working with them should be equipped to benefit from and participate fully within a local, regional, national and international context. YouthNet found that youth clubs often fear the issue of racism as it throws new situations into the mix as well as the continued ethno-religious and ethno-nationalist issues. They further note that young people from minority ethnic communities face multiple issues which compound their exclusion. This includes young people experiencing racism and bullying on a daily basis; parents having little or no knowledge of youth activities and initiatives on offer. In addition parents are not familiar with the purpose and methodologies implicit within youth work; as well as having limited levels of English vocabulary and language often leading to a lack of understanding of inter-generational & inter-cultural issues.

For example following a consultation with parents from the Polish community (2008), YouthAction noted that the parents were concerned about their children's safety as they had experienced specific racist bullying. The parents cited their lack of knowledge or awareness of information or services that the young people or they as parents could avail of. This included: lack of information on relevant activities for the young people made available to the parents; lack of translated materials; lack of activities for boys; and the lack of sign posting onto organisations that may be able of help.

Learning from Youth Action Northern Ireland practices further indicates that:

- Minority ethnic communities have a limited understanding of youth work (particularly parents).

- Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds have little or no knowledge of how to access youth provision.

- The need for a partner organisation when recruiting and working with minority ethnic communities is essential for the effectiveness of the project.

- Some young people from minority ethnic backgrounds are cautious about integrating with other communities.

- There is often a sense of fear and cultural misunderstandings amongst young people.

- Single identity work is needed across various minority ethnic groups rather than a 'clumping' of all young people from minority ethnic communities.

- There is often a lack of awareness for young indigenous people about minority ethnic groups – misinformation and misunderstanding affects their attitudes and behaviours.

- Indigenous young people rarely are given opportunities to find out about new and /or other cultures in and educative and meaningful way.

Youth work has the potential to be a vehicle or catalyst in addressing diversity, promoting inclusion and encouraging safe mobility among young people. Whilst youth work cannot remove the root causes of social exclusion and conflict, it is evident that responsive and empowering youth work can and does make a significant contribution in wider efforts to ensure that young people enjoy their fundamental rights and live, work and socialise in a society which celebrates diversity. We need to work alongside young people to support them to question their understandings and attitudes. We need to move beyond weak tolerances based on moderate respect to real and meaningful conversation and encounter which fosters mutual understanding and mutual respect.

Consultation findings (YouthAction NI 2008-2009)

YouthAction Northern Ireland carried out a series of focus group consultations with both young people from minority ethnic communities and with young people from indigenous communities throughout 2008-2009. 45 young people whose heritage countries are Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Brazil, Slovakia, Ukraine and Philippines were involved in focus groups alongside 38 young people from the established Northern Ireland community.

A summary of findings are presented below:

Young indigenous people had formed very stereotypical views of people from minority ethnic communities. This included comments such as they are ignorant; they flirt with your girlfriend; they all live in one house; they drink

a lot; they may have murdered someone back home; they wreck our fishing lake, leave beer cans lying around and they catch and eat pike out of lakes; they are always in the gazette for drinking or having no licence or insurance; they like their vodka; foreigners are trouble-makers; some of them are involved in the mafia; we don't feel safe with them; and they are not to be trusted.

One young person cited: *"You can tell them from their clothes - shoes, flares and you can tell from their physical appearance. Native people all dress similar and you can tell a foreigner straight away."*

Some young people expressed their frustrations at how they felt that young people from minority ethnic communities were receiving preferential treatment, albeit the necessary support to help the young people attain equal opportunities to succeed in education.

"Teachers give them more sympathy and favouritism …they get extensions on their coursework."

Indigenous young people however also expressed a willingness to improve relations with those from minority ethnic communities. They were also keen to gain an understanding of the backgrounds as to why some communities choose to reside in Northern Ireland.

"The more you learn about different people the more you can find in common."

"There should be more active learning like dancing and making certain foods to help us learn about each other."

Other young people expressed that they had not really stopped to think about the lives or needs of people from minority ethnic communities. This was expressed as both an active and passive ignorance.

"People only talk to them to borrow something."

"I am surprised at them being at our discos like Hilltown-then realised sure they are the same age as me-why would they not be there."

Young people from minority ethnic communities identified their concerns and realities of life in Northern Ireland. Many of them had experienced verbal bullying and at times physical attacks based on their 'perceived' and actual differences to the established community.

"In school some people pick on us and call us names e.g.: 'polo's' and sometimes we get in to fights."

"I definitely feel different than people that live here."

"One of my friends got their windows smashed in and kids threw eggs at the house - Sometimes the neighbours where we live ignore us and don't talk to us."

"There is a German boy in school and everyone does the Hitler sign to him."

One young person expressed his concerns at growing fears and concerns about the lack of employment in the local area. While local indigenous people are out of work at this time it was believed that they would resent the emerging communities for 'taking their jobs' and that tensions would result.

"With the current economic situation polish people feel threatened accused of stealing people's jobs to local communities. They are being refused benefits while losing their jobs."

Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds shared their aspirations to be part of the Irish culture and to access opportunities to mix, socialise and integrate with others.

"I think it is important not to stay only with people of my own community but to also try and meet new people."

"There should be more trips and activities to help us get to know each other better."

"I really enjoy living in Northern Ireland. I like the people and the way of living which is more laid back."

The young people noted however that the opportunities for making new friendships were limited and that they tended to mingle in their own communities.

"If you ask about hanging out with young people from different communities answer is yes. Most likely Slovakian, Czech, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Lithuanian. Not as much as with Northern Ireland groups (only work related)."

"We stick to hanging out with other Polish kids at school and at home."

The young people were also able to express their views on the differences and benefits of living either in Northern Ireland or their heritage country. Some viewed the education system as 'easier' in Northern Ireland; some viewed the health care in Northern Ireland as less professional; some noted the less expensive costs for entrances to the cinema and leisure facilities; some talked about the differences in cultural habits and customs and how this difference was a positive aspect; others noted the internal fighting and jealousy within some communities; and some believed that the diets of local people in Northern Ireland were unhealthy and often based on 'fast food'.

Challenges:

Young people

Young people have cited a variety of recommendations including: integrated social activities; the inclusion of other European foods in the school canteen; additional English classes for young people from other countries; opportunities to learn about one another's cultures; recognition that young people from minority ethnic communities are often Irish or British citizens; opportunities for local young people to understand the context of countries like Poland and Lithuania; opportunities for site visits, study visits and exchanges to heritage countries for local young people; and more opportunities to know what support and services are available. *"I think it is also important not to stay only with people of my own community and try to meet new people."*

"Young people are keen to build relationships across different backgrounds but often do not have the opportunity to do so or lack the tools to actively challenge racist attitudes among their peers. Formal and non-formal approaches need to consider how they work with young people from minority ethnic communities and with indigenous young people to challenge their attitudes and perceptions of one another. Our practices need to be targeting young people from minority ethnic communities and recognising that this is not a temporary phenomenon but a key element to inclusive youth work practices. Inclusive practice should seek to work with all young people and communicate with all stakeholders - considering a diversity of expectations, viewpoints and attitudes." (Martin Mc Mullan, YouthAction N.I., Nov 2009)

The community youth sector

- More information and awareness raising for both workers and young people about cultural diversity and interculturalism and what this can look like in a shared society

- Proactive recruitment of minority ethnic communities within youth work – inclusion / dealing with issues and creative integration (e.g. music, sport, drama)

- Partnership building and agreements to enhance opportunities for both young people from minority ethnic communities and young indigenous people

- Continuous research, needs assessment, testing models of practice and disseminating these to others

- New challenges for supporting asylum seekers and providing accommodation

- Financial support to build and sustain the practices

- Support for linguistic inclusion

- Provision of practical materials in various languages and formats (such as the Youth Action Northern Ireland Youth Achievement Awards which come in various language formats)

"To develop and embed proactive inclusive approaches workers and volunteers do require training but they should also embrace and present attitudes which are humanistic. They should have an appetite for ascertaining new insights, knowledge and experiences which enhances their understanding. Inclusive youth work approaches should really be inherent within the practitioner regardless of their level of knowledge of the inequality (inequalities)". As noted in a Russian proverb: *"There is no shame in not knowing. The shame lies in not finding out."* (Martin Mc Mullan)

YouthAction Northern Ireland Social Inclusion Youth worker Lizzy Smyth has been working with a wide range of young people from the Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Ukrainian and Slovakian communities. Through her contact work and her experiences she believes there are many differences amongst minority ethnic communities and that they should not be 'lumped' together as one group. *"We need single identity work across various minority ethnic groups as well as more awareness for young indigenous people about minority ethnic groups. They are often misinformed and misunderstand why other communities choose to live, work and contribute to life in Ireland. When do these supposed 'new' communities stop being 'new communities'?"*

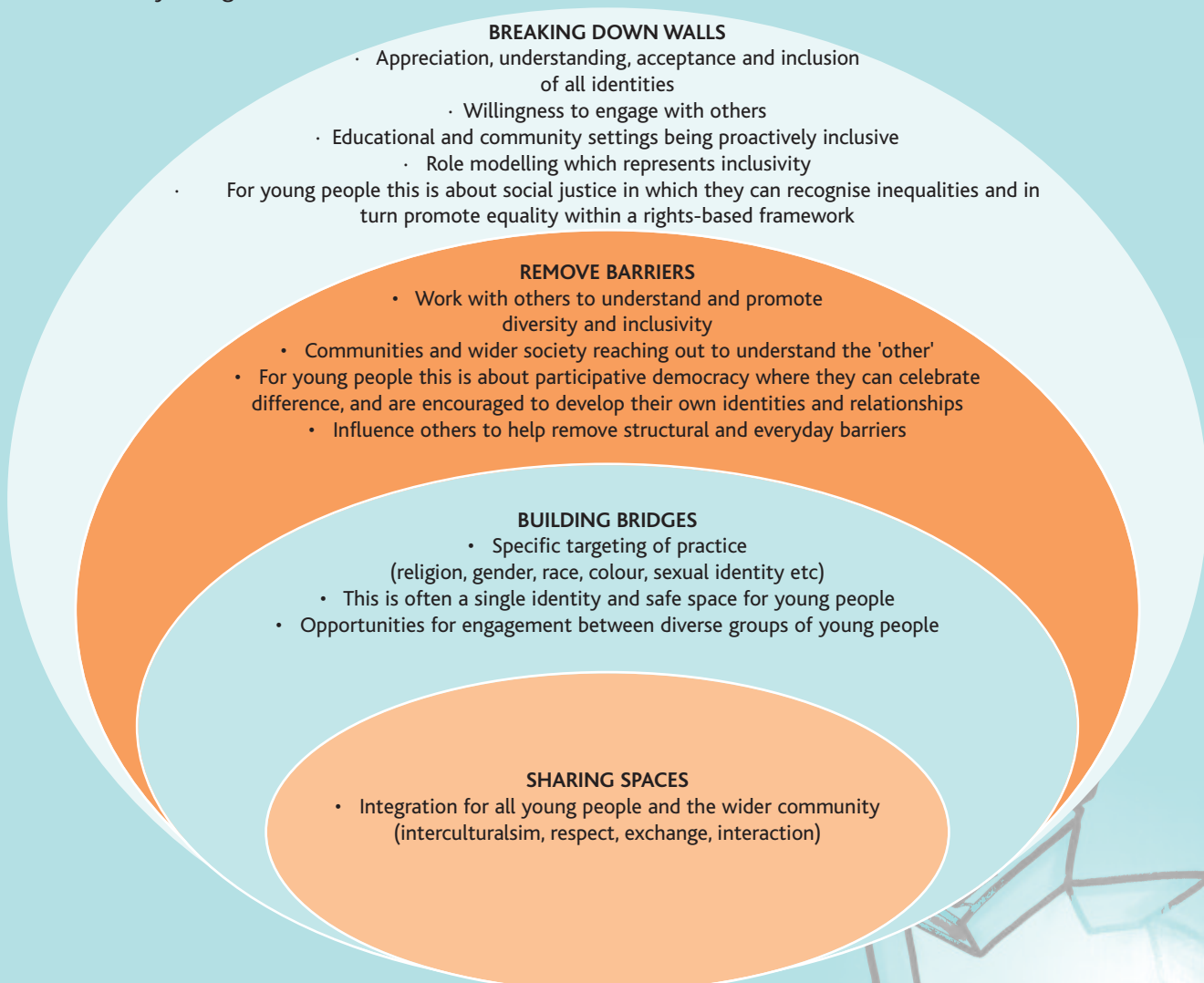Youth work should combine a tripartite approach in which there are generic mechanisms in which youth environments are inclusive and can challenge attitudes and perceptions (verbally, physically, socially etc). Secondly there should be specific targeting where young people from minority ethnic communities and indigenous young people can access separate interventions appropriate to their needs. Thirdly there

should be attempts to embed integration among young people. Educating the wider community and building the sphere of influence about issues specific to exclusion/inclusion and separation/integration should be ongoing throughout. Inclusive learning is fundamental and this should be tailored, relevant and appropriate in relation to its content, methodology, resources and evaluation practices.

Models of inclusive practice:

Northern Ireland has a strong tradition of youth and community organisations – such as *YouthAction Northern Ireland* – with the skills, capacity, expertise, vision and will to dismantle barriers for young people to have the opportunity to embrace diversity, practice inclusion and enter into intercultural and intercommunity dialogue.

YouthAction Northern Ireland targeted practices with minority ethnic communities have included: Newry/Mourne/Armagh (Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Ukraine, Brazil, Slovakia communities), Ballymena (Romanian community), Belfast (Polish, Indian, Chinese, An Munia Tober) and Derry travellers /Coalisland An Tearmann (young mothers). Young people within these initiatives have had opportunities to be recognised and accredited for their participation through the YouthAction Youth Achievement Awards recognised by ASDAN – formats have included: Polish, Russian, Spanish and Portuguese.

BREAKING DOWN WALLS
· Appreciation, understanding, acceptance and inclusion of all identities
· Willingness to engage with others
· Educational and community settings being proactively inclusive
· Role modelling which represents inclusivity
· For young people this is about social justice in which they can recognise inequalities and in turn promote equality within a rights-based framework

REMOVE BARRIERS
• Work with others to understand and promote diversity and inclusivity
• Communities and wider society reaching out to understand the 'other'
• For young people this is about participative democracy where they can celebrate difference, and are encouraged to develop their own identities and relationships
• Influence others to help remove structural and everyday barriers

BUILDING BRIDGES
• Specific targeting of practice (religion, gender, race, colour, sexual identity etc)
• This is often a single identity and safe space for young people
• Opportunities for engagement between diverse groups of young people

SHARING SPACES
• Integration for all young people and the wider community (interculturalsim, respect, exchange, interaction)

CASE STUDY 1: The first **Spectrum** project worked with young people from the Indian community, being the first ever youth group from the Indian community. The second project was working with young people from the Polish community with the third being with young people from the Romanian community.

The model adopted was based on the youth arts Rainbow Factory through YouthAction Northern Ireland in which young people engage in a variety of creative arts such as dance and drama. Few young people from minority ethnic communities were aware of or engaged in the School for Performing Arts so YouthAction Northern Ireland proactively set out to build relationships with partner organisations and communities in an effort to bring arts to young people from minority ethnic communities. Partners were essential for the success of these projects. The host partner had knowledge, experience and accessibility to the young people while YouthAction Northern Ireland as a guest brought specialist youth work and youth arts skills and methodologies. The Youth tutor at YouthAction Northern Ireland noted that, *"Volunteers and workers who spoke the language reduced the mistrust that the community felt towards projects - it also helped them relax and understand intentions and expectations."*

All the young people within the Spectrum projects developed experiences of dance and drama which culminated in them creating a performance that detailed what they thought about living in Northern Ireland. This was performed to various community representatives from both Northern Ireland and the Indian/ Polish / Romanian community within Northern Ireland. Young people from these communities have now been integrated within the broader Youth Action School of Performing arts.

Case study 2: The **social inclusion** project across Newry/ Mourne/ Armagh. This project had 3 priorities through its 2008-2010 funding: Engage with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds throughout Newry, Mourne and Armagh; engage with young people to support their understanding of a shared future and to explore their attitudes towards difference; and work with others to increase dialogue, action and strategic plans to promote social inclusion. This discussion paper provides much of the key learning from the social inclusion project.

External models of practice:

The Southern Education Library Board (SELB) Youth Service (Inclusion Unit) prioritises inclusion throughout its training and practices.

Their mission is to ensure the active participation of young people and minimal exclusion within the Youth Service and wider society. Through this the outcome will be the building of a better, shared, peaceful, fair and inclusive society, promoting ease with difference, trust and relationship building. The key principles guiding the work of the SELB Youth Service are: prioritising attention to inclusion issues; emphasising participation as a central component to social inclusion; and that children and young people's rights should be actively promoted and protected.

JEDI Training Suite (Joined in Equity Diversity and Interdependence)

Within the JEDI Initiative a suite of training programmes and supporting resources have been developed which will help young people, volunteers, part-time and full-time youth workers, managers and policy makers to employ the EDI (Equity, Diversity & Interdependence) principles. These resources have been developed through consultation and dialogue with key practitioners to meet practical needs at a range of levels within the service.

EDI Training Programmes are delivered in the field by the Education & Library Boards and two Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations: YouthAction Northern Ireland & Youth Link Northern Ireland.

- **Introduction to CR/EDI** - This programme aims to introduce practitioners to Community Relations and EDI work with young people and the ethos and values which underpin it.

- **Programme Development for Introductory CR/EDI Work with Young People** - This programme is for those who have completed the Introduction to CR/EDI and wish to deliver introductory CR/EDI youth work programmes. This programme will accommodate those completing the current Introduction to CR/EDI Work who DO NOT wish to progress to the current advanced programme and wish to deliver CR/EDI programmes at Introductory level).

- **CR/EDI for Practitioners Working with Young People** - in-depth training for experienced practitioners - in-depth training for experienced practitioners wishing to deliver more advanced CR/EDI programmes with young people.

- **Good Relations & Diversity Programme for young people**
  This programme is designed for young people aged 15-17 years old. The 30 hour programme aims to provide experiential learning opportunities for young people to further their knowledge and understanding of the themes of identity, culture, diversity, community conflict, local and global citizenship and democracy. The programme is accredited at level one and consists of five learning outcomes which are sub-divided into a series of tasks which, on completion should enable young people to meet the assessment criteria.

- **Managers - EDI Strategic Planning Award: Mainstreaming Equality, Diversity and Good Relations in Youth Service**
  The Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (EDI) Strategic Planning Award has been developed to support managers and policy makers appointed to mainstream equality, diversity and good relations within youth agencies across Northern Ireland. Six learning outcomes support and accredit workers with the knowledge and experience necessary to deliver on this agenda. The programme has been developed to accompany the Step by Step Guide to embedding EDI at the core of the policy and operations of youth agencies.

A CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE:

YouthAction Northern Ireland while promoting integration for all young people also recognises that young people from minority ethnic communities may require separate interventions in which they can safely express their views, attitudes and experiences. Likewise there should be generic interventions in which young people from indigenous communities have opportunities to consider their attitudes and views towards difference and diversity throughout our communities. Awareness raising, education and shared initiatives should be the catalyst for wider integration, reflecting a society which embraces difference and moves beyond weak tolerances to understanding and acceptance.

Processes of cultural understandings, acceptance and even cultural transformation apply not only to work focussing on racism and work with minority ethnic communities but also centred on work addressing sectarianism and other areas of conflict and tension such as gender and sexual identity. A shared society of cohesion and integration is relevant to all its citizens and should work for the inclusion of all. To transform young people's attitudes and behaviours in a way which embraces diversity will require a co-ordinated approach to educating not only young people but parents, teachers, youth workers and other spheres of influence on young people's lives. Energising people to desire change and to understand transformation will require alliances who are willing to invest in a co-ordinated approach in making the abstract and talk become an active reality.

Partnership working

Using a 'Black and Minority Ethnic' (BME) partner is advised in all work with BME young people. If the relationship between partners is strong, this will have a positive impact on the programme and young people involved.

- A person of the same nationality and culture as the participants is preferable. Using a non-native speaker may affect:

- Depth of engagement

- Awareness / understanding of body language

- Awareness of traditional culture

- Awareness / knowledge of participant's culture and activities in this context.

- Identification and connection of young people with the programme

- The lack of trust with a non-native speaker

- It provides easier recruitment of young people because the young people, the venue, parents, wider community 'buy in' more easily.

- The 'partner' will act as an ambassador for their culture, nationality, community, etc.

- It makes it easier to build relationships with the families of young people.

- Working with a 'partner' from within that BME group can help to overcome any trust issues and develop less 'them and us' and more 'we'.

- The 'partner' can interpret and break down the language and culture barriers. One role of the 'partner' will probably be language interpretation, but they are not a traditional 'third party' interpreter. They need involved in the work from conception through the whole process to evaluation.

- Awareness of culture is very important, as this includes understanding of cultural activities (E.g. dances, music, religion, etc.) but also understanding of 'ways of life' and how these have adapted to Northern Ireland. (E.g. what is an appropriate way to communicate with adults, parents, etc? What is appropriate in physical contact?)

- For this work to be successful working in partnership is essential. It is vital that this partnering relationship remains a positive relationship.

Recruitment of a 'partner'

Partners are often recruited through previous relationships such as agencies, organisations, networks, local communities and personal contacts. All partners must:

- Have skills and experience to undertake the role.

- Be open to new ideas and new learning.

- Be willing to compromise.

- Be willing to learn from each other.

- See the positive potential in young people and strive to support the realisation of that potential.

- Be clear on the project aims and outcomes.

- Be involved in the programme and see the value / worth in the work.

- See potential of the programme in the long term.

- Respect the ideas and knowledge of others.

- Reflect on and discuss the aims and objectives of the programme.

- Evaluate the outcomes of the work with young people and the wider community.

- Consider the long term integration of young people through the project e.g. How can this be facilitated naturally?

Recruitment of young people

- Recognise not all BME groups want to work together. Single identity work is often more appropriate.

- Introduction of arts by taster sessions is essential (for arts based approaches). It can be useful to include parents or other interested parties (e.g. potential partners) in these introductions / taster sessions.

- The 'partner' is primary in the recruitment of young people.

- Participants need to understand all processes in the programme in order to be fully involved.

- Connect to previous contacts and other organisations working with BME young people. Provide them with information, posters, flyers, etc. Remember language in relation to written information.

- Utilise available media opportunities for the relevant BME community (e.g. Polish, Liveo Newspaper.) Partner should know of these methods of communication.

Working with young people

- A contract or boundaries for effective working relationships should be agreed with young people and this should follow agency/partner guidelines. However it also needs to include an agreed language (language for all communication i.e. spoken and written). This doesn't have to be English but it needs to be considered whether a different language is practical.

- Young people need to understand the purpose of any initiative and be actively involved in identifying possible outcomes and methods throughout.

- The facilitator should encourage participation of young people throughout and clarify why this approach is used within a community youth work context.

- Despite possible language difficulties, workers shouldn't restrict communication. One role of the partner is likely to be interpreter but workers should endeavour to be creative and use action/activity based approaches; multimedia; interpreters, etc. Awareness of any differences in body language across cultures is also vital.

- It is important to say 'I don't know' or 'I don't understand' in relation to language, culture, body language etc. It is much better to have a 'so teach me…..' attitude. Alongside young people being inquisitive they should have opportunities to have meaningful and well managed encounters with other young people which are not about shallow polite tolerances.

- All programmes must be evaluated. It may be appropriate to do evaluations in the participant's first language. This may encourage responses beyond single words and phrases. Review and monitoring against outcomes should take place on a regular basis.

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Other papers in the suite of seminars include:

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