Defining Diversity: Creating Community

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Project Description

Defining Diversity: Creating Community (DDCC) is a two year participatory action research project developed through a partnership among Vancouver Island University (VIU), Tla'amin Community Health, and the Powell River Model Community Project. Designed to increase community capacity, resilience, and sustainability, the project promoted a two day course crafted to advance Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) within a safe and supportive space for reflection and dialogue; 71 people took advantage of the opportunity. The project has been actively supported and funded by community organizations who collectively matched a grant from the Vancouver Foundation (Appendix A). The project responds to the questions:

> How does participation in educational experiences that include a deep exploration of the meaning and value of diversity in our community, combined with the introduction of asset based thinking, impact citizens? More specifically, how does the educational experience Defining Diversity, Creating Community impact each citizen's view of self, their relationships with others, and their capacity to contribute to the social and economic well-being of their community over time?

Background

Powell River is a community facing economic struggles including a loss of services and jobs. Inexorably tied to Catalyst's fortunes[1], Powell River is vulnerable to the resource industry's decline (What lies ahead, 2012). Faced with a slowing economy and government cut backs, the community noted rising social problems such as mental health and addictions, homelessness, family violence and, on the whole, a greater reliance on social programming at a time when these programs are at risk financially. The Report Highlights which are included in Powell *River Vital Signs 2011-12* flagged increasing child poverty, low family income, and challenges in keeping our youth and new-comers in the community (Powell River Community Foundation, 2012, p. 5).

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[1] Powell River Mill, Catalyst Paper http://www.catalystpaper.com/media/gallery/facilities/powell-river-mill

Powell River citizens have historically placed responsibility on business and political leadership, and social programs have relied on corporate charity to augment government funding. In the face of a changing reality with both government funding and corporate charity reduced, the community was fractured in its approaches. There was concern that a lack of understanding between groups and individuals stalled progress and increased disengagement from civic life. However, an interest and commitment to diversity and ABCD also existed. Increasingly citizens were connecting and reconnecting in the manner that resonates with networking as described by Wheatley and Frieze (2006). The DDCC project catalyzed this shift and increased the community's capacity, resilience, and sustainability by educating about diversity, ABCD, and by bringing citizens into new relationship with one another.

Goals and Objectives

Three goals were developed at the onset of the project. Each goal included several objectives. The details are provided in Appendix B.

Goal 1: To increase the community's capacity, resilience, and sustainability by delivering an innovative two day program to diverse groups of citizens.

Goal 2: To spark greater citizen contribution and involvement in local social and economic activity.

Goal 3: To demonstrate the efficacy of this approach to social and economic change.

<u>**Project Methods**</u>

The project consisted of four two-day community education course offerings and participant surveys which are now complete. Focus groups and a learning circle are still in progress. The survey captures demographics including self-identification in diverse multiple identities. The focus groups provide opportunities to share the impact of the course on each person and their community to date, but are also intended to rekindle a passion for contribution

and change. Focus groups are audio recorded and transcribed. In some cases video and flip chart notes augment understanding of the transcripts. The intention of the survey and focus groups are to seek quantitative and qualitative evidence of attitudinal changes, actions taken to improve social and economic well-being, shifts in beliefs, and changes in working relationships.

Survey Results – Group A, B, C, and D

The survey response rate was below 20% making the results unreliable when it comes to generalizability. However, the information provided by those who did complete the survey is still valuable. A summary of the results will be provided in the final report.

Focus Groups A, B, and C - Common Themes

Following each course offering a two hour focus group was scheduled. Three of the four focus groups have been complete at the time of writing this report. Attendance at the focus groups was just under 30% (details provided in Appendix C). Emerging themes were organized to help understand the impact of participation in the educational offering on participants in response to the research question. We considered:

- view of self
- relationships with others
- capacity to contribute to community social well-being
- capacity to contribute to community economic well-being
- capacity to sustain contributions over time

In addition, we recorded specific contributions participants made to social and economic well-being, their ideas about the future, and their input about changes we could make to the course, Defining Diversity, Creating Community. This report provides a snapshot of each theme which is then followed by direct participant quotes. The quotes are identified as from either focus group A, B, or C. Participants at each focus group were assigned a number in the transcript. This number is provided as P. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. When the transcriber was unable to identify the voice of the speaker, she used P. unidentified.

Impact on View of Self

    Shifting perspectives and roles.

    Without exception, participants noted a shift in their own perspective about other people, those people's uniqueness, and their value as community members. They felt more knowledgeable, respectful, and curious about people different from themselves and more aware of one another's' distinct history and experience in our community. They also felt more articulate about the nuance of difference. The following direct quotes from participants bring this theme to life.

Certain individuals that participated that day, I just had never given one single thought to how their life must be, and that just really hurt me. It made me feel like I need to work on a lot of things. I feel like I am a really good person, but that day really opened my eyes to how much more changing I can do … (Group A. P. unidentified)

For me, I have a good grounding in community development, so it wasn't new, but what was very new for that piece was getting in touch with the whole residential school experience and the whole experience of people in my community. (Group A, P. 2)

It stayed with me so that I feel I am slightly different in that sense since taking this because I am even more open minded now. I came away with something. (Group A, P. 1)

She was talking about sexual orientation and stuff. She was just saying that you know at the end of the day, you are still a person and it shouldn't really reflect on you about who you love, the fact that love is love. (Group B, P. 6)

Disabilities come in many different forms, of either drug abuse and it's just accepting people with those problems and just how that eventually creates community and understanding it as a whole (Group B, P. 2)

Everybody is so different, and we all fit in such different spots in community. It made you kind of stop and think about where you fit and recognizing how diverse our community is really. (Group C, P. 1)

    Increased sense of responsibility.

    In addition, many participants could articulate some measurable increase in their sense of responsibility for others in Powell River often giving specific examples of conversations they

had initiated about diversity and change, actions they had taken or new volunteer roles initiated.

Here are some quotes that illuminate this theme. Specific examples are also provided under the

title *List of Actions Taken.*

Yes, that once this has happened, we can't very well shut up … (Group A, P. 1)

I have a bigger sense of awareness, and I took away with that I decided my social responsibility
needed to be bigger. I made a commitment to … more social responsibilities, particularly in my
workplace. (Group A, P. unidentified)

We have done a lot of volunteering, like one person may be working and there is an activity and
another person that is a worker will come in and volunteer for three to four hours to make sure an
outing is able to happen. That has happened a lot also. (Group A. P. 4)

I spent the whole weekend in Victoria and I got to see quite a bit of poverty and stuff. I thought
by giving the people down there a little bit of the money that I could give them was encouraging.
There were some really beautiful musicians playing on the streets, and I thought that would be a
good way to support them. (Group B, P. 2)

…. there was a gentleman in town who holds up a sign that he will work for food, and I've seen
him throughout town quite a few times. I thought I would be supportive and go actually talk to
him and see what he has done to actually get a job and become part of the community. He said
it's just from face value. He looks a different way than most people. He has got tattoos on his
face and he says it is a really hard icebreaker and people don't really want to give him that (__)
so I talked to him a bit about a couple of places that I knew that would probably look for
someone who would labour. After that, I told him about Career Link, and I actually gave him
ten dollars. (Group B. P. 2)

I went to that Valentine's dance [hosted by the Diversity Initiative because I was trying to get a
lot of the people that I support to go and be a part of community, but I ended up having so darn
much fun. So, I thought oh…next time I might go just on my own. (Group C, P. 1)

Well, I think that I would probably even continue doing some of the things if I wasn't working
that I was doing while I was working. You know what I mean? It will make me more aware of
things going on that I might not have taken part in before. (Group C, P. 1)

Importance of locatedness.

Participants attributed the high impact of their experience to issues we have broadly

named locatedness. Their experience was contextual and took place in a learning environment

specifically crafted to create safety, engage, and foster personal reflection and interpersonal

connection. The energy created in the space by the demeanour and style of course leaders was

frequently noted. It allowed for difficult conversations including conversations about conflict and

violence to emerge in the context of mutual respect and peace. Participation of First Nation's

elders was especially powerful. Participants appreciated the focus on the process of exploring

topics together with no predetermined outcome. Some participants noted their own greater sense

of identity as a citizen of our region and in some cases, a citizen of the world. Others noted the

impact of the importance of the specific location for courses like this as well as for other events

in our community.[2] Some participants noted similar issues of locatedness as making a difference

in the experience of marginalized individuals in other settings. The following direct quotes from

participants support this theme.

I think it was because there was so much candor. I think that is what caused that safety. There were the housekeeping components which was, this is a safe environment and so on, but I think where you really started to see some of those emotions and see some of that real candor, deep personal things being shared, that sort of opened the door to everyone to say okay, this is safe, not just for that person but safe for me so let's make that person feel safe as well. (Group A, P. 5)

If I had just gone and read all this on a piece of paper, it would have gone straight over my head; but actually being there and listening to it, that is what grabbed my attention and helped me learn it. (Group A, P. 6)

Yes, nobody is blowing each other up here. It didn't seem as aggressive, but I'm sure they had their moments, do you know what I mean. It was just nice to hear from people who weren't left wingers or whatever, or they had their political stance. They were sharing it in a respectful manner, and it was just a beautiful, teachable moment that resonated on their own experience plus gave me that teachable moment to have similarities plus to see what it is like when people can talk about those horrid things from the past without the aggression kind of thing. Do you know what I mean? (Group A, P. 1)

For me, it was the diversity in the room that it wasn't all professionals, and it wasn't all of one group. It was a mixed group. We got to see things through somebody else's lens. (Group C, P. unidentified)

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[2] Note – course deliveries were intentionally scheduled at different locales including Tla'amin Community Health, Ocean View Education Center, and Vancouver Island University – PR Campus.

It is, absolutely, I mean you see people gaining strength from who they identify with or labels, if you like, and you see people hiding behind them. You see people using them to different levels and how that works in a community. (Group C, P.2)

Actually, I was going to talk about the word invitation. For me and for diversity, there needs to be an invitation, but there can't be a solid agenda. You might all get together to talk about one thing, but if you have already determined the outcome, then there is no invitation to be open or to listen or to have anybody to contribute. So I think that it needs to be organic. You put out the invitations, but let the process do its thing. (Group C, P. unidentified)

Impact on Relationships with Others

Participant spoke about the impact the course had on their relationships with one another and with others in the community. They talked about their expanded relationships and their concern for those who remain lonely and isolated. They believe ongoing prejudice and discrimination remain barriers to a sense of belonging and well-being for some citizens.

Value, initiate and expand relationships across divides / Expand networks.

Participants noted greater connections with one another and felt that their experience had deepened and/or extended their networks across traditional divides like age, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and ability and created connections between agencies, groups, and services previously operating more like silos. These direct quotes express this theme.

The way I felt about it when you guys were talking about the different age groups, as being one of the younger ones, I felt that since the three of us that weren't adults yet, the maturity level helped a lot with being able to comprehend what was being said. (Group A, P.6)

…it really crossed the age gaps because listening to the younger guys, it really gave me a kind of a window into, because I don't know prior to that the last time I had a conversation with a person your age. (Group A, P.1)

After coming here, I made friends with some people that I thought were a little bit different and I didn't really think I would. Now, they are some of my best friends at school, and I hang out with them every single day instead of just the people I always hung out with. (Group A, P. 6)

There was such a diverse cross section; lots of connections were made, young and old, native and non-native. It was like a little microcosm of what you want a whole diversity of initiative to be. (Group A, P. unidentified)

I am going to pay more attention to the United Way, now that I know that [Participant 5] is on the board. I see [Participant 6] in the car in the parade and it is like, I know her, now …. I made connections around business. (Group A, P. unidentified)

I found that I walked away realizing that the circle had gotten bigger, and my awareness had grown, and it was so exciting to find out how many more wonderful initiatives are happening in this community. … There were other things that I wasn't aware of like the youth facility where you guys play basketball and stuff. I had no idea that was going on in Powell River, so it brought about more awareness and more opportunities to help out …. this workshop is fun. Not only does it like give you knowledge about the community and how we can define diversity, like how we can improve it; but it creates a network of people that you didn't know before (Group B, P. 2)

… also I want to talk to PRACL about getting some volunteers in there as well. (Group B, P. 1)

Yeah, quite often you go to those things and they are populated by middle-aged white women. So, it was nice to have a variety of ages, experiences, yeah…(Group C, P. 2)

There's a man in the neighbourhood who use to be a carpenter or knows about engines and just hooking up a few kids that are interested in that. If they are interested then give them the opportunity and see where it goes. (Group C, P. unidentified)

Concern for citizens who are isolated and lonely.

Participants acknowledged the inclusiveness in our region and sense of belonging.

However, they also frequently expressed concern for citizens who continue to experience

loneliness and isolation and spent time in the focus groups examining some of the possible

causes and solutions. Participants were concerned that prejudice and discrimination still exist in

Powell River and limit the social networks and supports for some individuals. As they grappled

with their concern which was largely for individuals who live with a disability and for older

people, they also noted the untapped potential for contribution from these same groups. The

following quotes articulate this theme in the direct voice of participants.

It is just so diverse, like you were saying earlier, there is a lot of stuff that goes on in town, and it is quite diverse. But yet, it is like an underbelly of lost-ness of different folks that I just could never get why it doesn't jive. (Group A, P. 1)

When the medical issues happen, that's when it gets very difficult when they have to go to ECU [Extended Care Unit], then they become very isolated and families have to stick together (Group A, P. 4)

… some of the folks I work with, it is difficult to have them in groups at times because people ignore them. It is not a good feeling, so finding somewhere for people to go where they are actually accepted can be challenging. … I think about the unconscious reasons why prejudice and discrimination continue to exist and finding places for people to be accepted is a strategy, but really we have to start working at the roots of prejudice and discrimination because there is as much oppression going on now; it just looks different. (Group A, P. unidentified)

… if I was to go to another country and I was to be the minority, would I be treated the same as how other minority groups get treated when they are here in my home? We are pretty human that way. We are very much the same that way. (Group B, P. unidentified)

And sometimes those labels are used for judgment as opposed to acceptance. (Group C, P. unidentified)

I see extremes. I see the extremely busy and then I see the extremely lonely with nothing to do. It seems to be one or the other quite often; it doesn't seem to be balanced. So somehow tapping into all the lonely seniors out there and make[ing] them feel like they have purpose. [might help] (Group C, P. 1)

When I was saying that, you know, it's not always just the time, it's a sense of what's expected of me when I get there, like I'm going to have to do something instead of …. [Participant explaining that volunteering can be anxiety producing for many people] (Group C. P. 2)

Impact on Capacity to Contribute to Social Well-Being

        Almost all participants articulated an increased capacity to contribute to social well-being in our region or felt invigorated in their ongoing efforts. This result was in contrast to the confusion they expressed about their role and contribution to the region's economic well-being. Most participants were already connected to social development or readily connected to this work. They embraced conversations about overcoming barriers and problem-solving issues like reduced funding, insufficient time, policy constraints, duplication of service, and long standing divides. These quotes provide a snapshot of what they said.

Whenever I hear that, not that it is not wrong, I start looking at the glass half full philosophy. If we can't do it on the left, let's try it on the right. It makes you think more creatively. (Group A. P. 1)

You have to be aware of all the policies and procedures when you start bringing volunteers in. [talking about the barrier that criminal record checks for volunteers who want to become part of an individual's personal network can create]

Jack the ripper isn't coming. [in response to above comment] (Group A, conversation between P. 4 and P. 6)

Bumper stickers. Get the Vancouver Canucks to say, "I'm from British Columbia and I support diversities. (Group B, P. 2)

It made me think of when we are different than someone else. We see it as a threat because there is fear in not understanding. So perhaps if they are poor, they have got an addiction, they have different coloured skin. They could represent threats on a lot of different fronts instead of looking at the sameness. (Group C, P. unidentified)

No, it's just, it's just not that easy. I've been out there trying to find people to do things in this connector role and people are pretty busy and they are guarding their time for their own family, for themselves and people say no. You hear a lot of no before you find that one person who is going to have the time and the heart and the ability to say yes, I want to give back to community and give an hour or two a week to so-in-so. It's easy to say, but it's… (Group C, P. 1)

And when you do get the time, you want to spend it with your partner, or your parents or your kids or your grandkids and you have to reserve time for (?) (Group C, p. 1)

… most people have no time right now, but there's also that other element of, we're such an insular society, culture really. It is hard to kind of step out of your comfort zone. So that excuse of time has become easy for us to use. (Group C, P. 2)

It comes naturally to a lot of people and it comes and you are actually making a difference by modeling or relating that to other people when they are seeing it happening. (Group C. P. 3)

Impact on Capacity to Contribute to Economic Well-Being

As noted earlier, participants struggled to articulate the impact of their educational experience on their capacity to contribute to the economic well-being of our region. Data analysis revealed this was in part due to their more individual or personal focus on their own survival and the survival of their loved ones. In addition, the language surrounding economic well-being was foreign to most and was seen as bigger or outside of their purview. They tended to understand economic well-being within the very traditional norms defined by capitalism and

had not considered alternatives. Participation in the survey and focus group did contribute to a

broadening of the definition of economic well-being, however, feedback was so clear in this

section of the research that we revised day two of the course to support Group D participants to

better understand and embrace their capacity to contribute to our economic future. Some

information about this shift is available on the DDDC blog site at this address:

http://wordpress.viu.ca/ddcc/2014/07/21/defining-diversity-creating-community-may-3-and-4-

2014/. Participants were definitely concerned about the economic future of our region and

wanted to help; they just weren't quite sure how.

>   **Limited by concern for personal and/or family survival / poverty / job loss.**

>   The following quotes come directly from participants and show how participants struggle

to consider contribution to economic well-being beyond their own family or work place.

I was just going to say actually I worry about my kids in the sense of economic development
already. (Group A, P. unidentified)

[My daughter is] going to college on scholarship ... That should help. (Group A, P. 6)

… [I'm concerned about] folks that are close to living below the poverty line (Group A, P. 1)

So our economic development has been that we have less staff, we have less time; the work still
has to happen and people are not being able to get out the way they use to, so you have to have
that economic development so that the social development can happen. (Group A, P. 4))

The economic one throws me for a loop as well because I'm thinking, you know if you take a
look at different incomes in the town and the people that are hurting, what I think economics are
strictly from a buck point of view, I'm thinking there are so many groups donating whatever to
try and keep some balance that how do you increase the economics? Where do you get it going,
how do you start it off? I get stuck there all the time. (Group A, P. 1)

Even people who fundamentally have a roof over their head, a little bit of food in their cupboards
are still struggling, so he is not alone in those struggles. I told him about the Food Bank as well.
(Group B, Part 2)

No, it's just; it's just not that easy. I've been out there trying to find people to do things in this
connector role and people are pretty busy and they are guarding their time for their own family,
for themselves and people say no. (Group C, P. 1)

Definition of economic well-being a barrier.

They struggled to identify how they could contribute to the broader community in part

because their definition of economic well-being was quite narrow.

Through my lens, when I hear the words economic development or when I engage with people and that term comes up, it's almost like my knee jerk reaction and in my kind of peer group, it is synonymous with politics. It's political. (Group A, P. unidentified)

I don't think I have ever thought about economic development, except for my own probably. (Group A, P. unidentified)

I didn't see that the workshop itself was structured in such a way that it led me to think a whole lot about the economic development. (Group A, P. unidentified)

Personally, it is too big for me, the question is too big, I can't wrap my head around it in the moment. (Group A, P. unidentified)

This is too big for me… (Group B, P. 3)

Broadening definition of economic development.

The focus group provided an opportunity to expand thinking about economic well-being.

Facilitators and the researcher provided some input about alternatives economies and various viewpoints.

The following quotes demonstrate the impact of this dialogue and show how new ways of thinking about

community assets including food security, an emphasis on reduced carbon footprint, and cooperative

models rapidly emerged.

Would that be something like the Patricia Theatre having to change to digital and everybody rallying behind and going we need this place and setting up an organization, The Friends of the Patricia Theatre, that sort of thing. (Group A, P. 1)

I think that by having a better understanding or a better list of our inventory so that we can reach into that inventory or reach into that well to use, modify and change some of those programs that we have today that need adjustment or we need to create new ones. I think we have to start by redefining our measurement of economic success. (Group A, P.5)

It's as many as 4 million people in this country that are considered to be food insecure, which means they either can't afford or can't access healthy, sufficient, safe and culturally appreciate(d) food. (Group B, P. 4)

I've begun to carpool and offer my vehicle to drive people around to and from work, or whenever I'm available to do so, so that the emissions, carbon footprint in the environment isn't so bad. I've taken the time to tell people who don't recycle that I would sort and take their recycling for them, which is non-profit for me. (Group B, P. 2)

Right now, I sit on the Food Security, that is a big piece already because I mean it is making a difference to all the school, you know the eating in the schools and taking off all the…(Group C, P. 3)

There is a group of us that got together and we did childcare chits. So we each made up our own, I don't know, we had twenty or something and we then just traded childcare with each and you just paid for it with a chit. So you always kind of had that element of paying for it, but…yeah. (Group C, P. 2)

Capacity to Sustain Contribution over Time

Participants' voices surfaced several themes about what they believe increased the capacity of community members including themselves to sustain their contribution so the social or economic well-being of our region over time. They talked about the importance of sharing stories and experiences and the need for a central location or resource to reduce silos and avoid duplication of effort. They believe that small contributions create a ripple effect and thereby promote larger scale change. This idea is supported by the community partners involved in the project who articulate community development activities they connect with the project. Participants are interested in engaging a wider group of citizens in the course content, especially business people. Like many before them, they see involving youth as key to a positive future; however, this theme is balanced with an emphasis on all citizens taking personal responsibility for change now! Participants appear increasingly committed to exploring alternative economics and to an asset based approach.

Importance of shared experiences and shared stories.

Here are some of the participant quotes that emphasize the importance they place on

sharing experiences and stories.

I just know that it is a diversity initiative and it's about understanding people and their stories at a very individual level ……. and honoring the diversity and interest level [of each] citizen. (Group A. P. unidentified)

In watching the movie himself too, he saw that even people who come from different nationalities, different ethnic groups and that he wasn't the only one. He goes to Blackberry Festival now and he feels more accepted, which is great .So, I was like, I want to hear about your story now like how do you feel and he said he is building connections. (Group B, P. 3)

It's really interesting to hear peoples' stories, and I find that people need to tell their story of their life again and again and again until they either believe it or they can validate themselves with it. When you listen to other people struggle with telling their story and they say the same things over and over; there is that element of patience that I find that comes. When you are listening, the patience and acceptance whether or not they know that that is what you are giving them. I think it is important from the perspective of diversity in creating community that needs to be honoured in how we listen. (Group C, P. 2)

Central location / Centralized resources / Less duplication.

Next are participant comments that show their interest in centralization as a tool to

maximize our efforts and reduce duplication.

I think this community, there is lots of great things happening, but there is no central place to find out. I think if somebody took the lead with that that could be pretty powerful. (Group A, P. 5)

I see that the kind of reality that there are a lot of groups doing stuff, but it is almost like never the twain shall meet. They have their own little hierarchy … even visiting shut-ins. (Group A, P. 1)

But again what this community, we have Volunteer Powell River, but it's not robust. Not everybody uses it to what it could be, but I think a central place where you could go to find out what is needed or when it's needed, something like that. I think that could be the start of something. (Group A, P. 5)

Like if we were to build something like a repository of assets for economic development …. letting people know (Group A, P. unidentified)

Ripple effect.

Here are participants' direct thoughts about the ripple effect and its potential for large

scale change. This theme is interesting because of its alignment with Wheatley and Frieze (2006)

whose work inspired this project. They described emergence as a method for system or

community change.

If you could take what was in that room and bring it out into the community … it would be really
sweet (Group A, P.1)

I think it has a potential to create a new lens for people and change the frame of reference they
are using. So, instead of just looking in, they are then looking out. …I think that if more people
were exposed to that type of openness, willingness and awareness of each other that it does have
the potential to shift whole communities. (Group A, P. 5)

I think if we allow people to have an understanding that less is more sometimes. A lot of people,
I feel, and myself included don't take things on because you feel you don't have the time or it is
too big, like you said. But, sometimes it can be a tiny little thing that will either have a trickle
effect and other people will join in or just that one tiny thing you have done is enough for that
day. It is better than having done nothing. (Group A, P. unidentified)

But again what this community, we have Volunteer Powell River, but it's not robust. Not
everybody uses it to what it could be, but I think a central place where you could go to find out
what is needed or when it's needed, something like that. I think that could be the start of
something. (Group A, P. 5)

I was just thinking if there was some kind of point system that businesses in town could get for
being diverse, or attending…an incentive for attending diversity gatherings. (Group B, P. 3)

The word hopeful keeps coming to mind. Hopeful, you know like, it keeps coming to mind for
me because I believe we can make a difference. (Group C, P. 3)

Start younger/Engage youth.

Hope was often a topic that segued to discussions about the importance of engaging

youth as well as some ideas about how to do this. Here are some quotes.

… I thought it would be kind of cool [if] this sort of material [was in] high schools or whatever
so that it is always an ongoing dialogue and it never goes away. (Group A, P. 1)

I think you have to start at a young age, younger than [Participant 6], developing resiliency in your community and individually. The world is moving and changing so fast as it is, that we need to be able to adapt and I think if we start really emphasizing adaptability and resilience, then when people get together, they won't be trying so hard to hold onto the norm and what they are use to. (Group A, P. 5)

I'm trying to remember how long the Empathy Project has been going in Powell River now. I think this is either year five or six. It is going to be really interesting to see what those children are like when they get to high school and older, but that's every kindergarten class. (Group A, P. unidentified)

I'm talking of younger ages too. (Group B, P. 4)

And work with younger groups, not just like elementary level children … (Group B, P. 1)

Even in high schools too because they are more knowledgeable than you think, smarter than their parents and stuff. (Group B, P. 3)

We can't affect the next generation unless we change and we get that awareness. I think that it's missed and that we have to teach the new generation is going to be the answer. The new generation is a brand new start and we are continuously talking on those levels, but we are not recognizing that we need to start now. We need to start today with us in order to create those new generations … (Group C, P. 2)

Shifting perspectives and roles.

The final set of excerpts demonstrate the impact the project had on shifting perspectives

and ideas about roles and responsibility for the social and economic well-being of our region.

That was the first time I had really listened to anybody talk about asset community development. It made a lot of sense. It made me start thinking a lot about, especially my own workplace. How I can make people understand assets better. (Group A, P. unidentified)

I think that by having a better understanding or a better list of our inventory so that we can reach into that inventory or reach into that well to use, modify and change some of those programs that we have today that need adjustment or we need to create new ones. I think we have to start by redefining our measurement of economic success. (Group A, P. 5)

Well, self-sufficiency is more, I mean economic growth is not sustainable. It's not sustainable for the health of everything and everyone. But, if you create self-sufficiency or what you can leverage to contribute in smaller ways, because I think that we all think when we measure our lives, when we look back, we think of the big things. We don't think about those small things

that we do every day and those little small things can accumulate to be something really big ….
(Group A, P. 5)

And I got the fireworks in there because I thought every individual person should be celebrated.
(Group B, P. 2)

The whole way of thinking in the asset-based community development and the coming together
in community and just all mixed together and it's been a mindset that I've been developing and
putting out there. I'm seeing it more and more everywhere I go. It seems like, you know if you
are pregnant then all the sudden you notice there are so many pregnant people. When you start
thinking that way then you go out into community and see that there are a lot of people thinking
the same way. (Group C, P. 1)

Some place like Safeway and stuff have hired people with differences and … (Group C, P. 3)

Actions Taken

Participants who attended the first three focus groups identified 47 specific actions they

had taken since their participation in Defining Diversity, Creating Community. Their individual

contributions are impressive and are listed in Appendix D.

Ideas

Participants also shared projects or further actions they believe might positively impact

our social and economic well-being.

- o Students volunteering
- o Eat healthy local food and get involved with farming folk
- o Sunshine Disposal not renewing contract – recycle crisis – write letters
- o Holding a diversity workshop or fair at the school
- o Diversity meet and greets
- o Point system for businesses for diversity – food, service, how community involved they are.
- o Horizon Business Award for diversity
- o Incentives for attending the course
- o Handing out PR Dollars in goody bags
- o Posters / bumper stickers / Canucks promote diversity / Spokesperson for the community
- o Punch cards for local businesses – like a student card "Diversity Loyalty Card"
- o Join global movements
- o Improve DDCC course, especially day two
- o Holding a diversity workshop or fair
- o Using food to engage youth

- o Food as a catalyst for connecting
- o Jam sessions as another catalyst to bring people together
- o Employers freeing up employees to volunteer on paid time
- o Cooperative Neighbourhoods – shared childcare, etc.
- o Childcare chits or credits
- o Diversity Cake or Ethnic Food events. (Food as a catalyst to bring people together)
- o Carlson Club as a gathering place. Build on their r fundraising model.
- o Employers give back by allowing staff to volunteer a portion of time each week/month during work time

Summary

Project findings indicate that providing an educational experience such as Defining Diversity, Creating Community has a powerful impact on participants individual and collectively. Measurable shifts in individual perspectives and roles, and increased responsibility are well documented and are largely credited to the qualities of the course summarized under the theme *importance of locatedness*. Collectively, groups felt better networked with one another and more able to extend their network. They felt energized and able to take actions that impacted social well-being. They developed strategies for sustaining citizen contribution over time including sharing experiences and stories, involving youth, centralizing information about volunteer and other opportunities, and continuing projects like this that shift mindsets. They confirmed that many small shifts and actions can result in large scale change. Participants explored the meaning of economic well-being and began an exploration of their role. Participant insights inspired and contributed to an important curriculum refinement that will increase course impact. The efficacy of an educational approach to social and economic change is demonstrated by the richness of the findings to date. Focus Group D and the learning circle will provide final opportunities to collect data and gain insight form project participants. A summative report including conclusions and recommendations will then be produced.
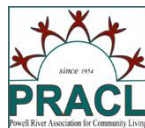
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Appendices

Appendix A - Defining Diversity: Creating Community Supporters and Funders

Vancouver Island University
Tla'Amin Community Health
Powell River Model Community Project
Powell River Region United Way
Powell River Diversity Initiative
First Credit Union
Powell River Friends of Film Society
Inclusion Powell River (previously PRACL)
School District 47
Community Living BC
Powell River Community Foundation
Powell River Regional Economic Development Society
Powell River Employment Program Society
Skookum Food Provisioners Cooperative
Vancouver Foundation

Tla'Amin Community Health

Appendix B - Defining Diversity: Creating Community - Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To increase the community's capacity, resilience, and sustainability by delivering an innovative two day program to diverse groups of citizens crafted to:
- increase knowledge of asset based community development;
- increase self-esteem through awareness of personal gifts; and
- increase the value placed on the gifts and contributions of others, especially those different from self.

Goal 2: To spark greater citizen contribution and involvement in local social and economic activity through:
- stronger ties to others and a reduces sense of isolation;
- increased respect and collaboration among participants;
- a sense of common purpose; and
- a shift in perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of leaders and citizens.

Goal 3: Demonstrate the efficacy of this approach to social and economic change.

Objectives:

1. Provide the two day program Defining Diversity: Creating Community to four groups of 20 citizens who represent diversity in age, ethnicity, ability, social role, and leadership role in business or government.
2. Evaluate the impact of the experience using community-engaged research.
3. Document the project using photography and social media to the degree possible.
4. Gather quantitative and qualitative information about specific change initiatives or collaborations by participants that create or enhance Powell River's social and economic future.
5. Summarize and report evaluation results and recommend next steps.

Appendix C – DDCC Course, Survey, Focus Group Participant Data

Group	Course		Survey Response		Focus Group Attendance	
	Registered	**Attended**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
A	23	21	6	28.6	6	28.6
B	20	17	1	5.9	5	29.4
C	19	17	3	17.6	5	29.4
D	16	16	3	18.8		
Total	78	71	13	18.3		
Average	19.5	17.75	3.25	17.7		

Appendix D – Ripple Effect / Participants' Contributions to Powell River Region

Group A	Group B	Group C
1. PR self-advocates advisor (includes volunteer hours)	19. Went to w/c basketball	40. Show diversity film at staff meeting / educating from heart
2. Community Drop in Planner for PRACL (another job that goes beyond it's hours)	20. I talk about the experience "collective like on Star Trek	41. Modeling respectful, inclusive behaviour
3. Food Bank Drive	21. I got my Powell River Dollars at NAPA	42. Diversity Valentine's day dance
4. Pay more attention to United Way	22. Work with you at my church	43. Taking people to CRC (great stuff about CRC)
5. Attended PowWow	23. Use my PR dollars	44. Showed DDDCC film at a staff meeting
6. Drama Class – PROUD YouTube	24. Begun to carpool	45. Role modeling the behaviour for other staff
7. Compassion Project	25. Reduce carbon footprint	46. Greater involvement in Food Security
8. Promote Diversability	26. Sort and recycle for others	47. Seedy Saturday
9. Human Library – I was a book about disability and social justice	27. Gave money to street people in Victoria	
10. Orca Bus	28. Talked to street person in PR with sign will work for food	
11. Asset based support to client support	29. Volunteer for Special O – Curling	
12. Zero Waste Station Sea Fair volunteer	30. Volunteer for ESL	
13. TYZE network	31. Volunteer in 2 K classs	
14. Get people to church – spiritual connection	32. Organizing Chinese New Years at the school	
15. United Way event – volunteer appreciate	33. Committed to stay in lower pd job because of social impact	
16. PR Diversity Board Member	34. Vendor Coordinator for Cultural Diversity Event	
17. Trash Bash	35. Valentine's diversity dance	
18. Youth Advisory Council	36. Increased ability to talk about diversity and community with others.	
	37. Thoughtful about ways to improve DDCC course	
	38. Sought out person in film who was discriminated against to find out how he was.	
	39. Continue what I'm doing…. I serve a great community	