

Introductory Call for the NCDD 2008 Conference Planning Team

January 17, 2008

On the call (14 people):

Sharon Almerigi
Gilles Asselin
Susan Stuart Clark
Janet Fiero
Rogier Gregoire

Barbara Heffernan
Sandy Heierbacher
Jacob Hess
Kevin Leahy
Jerry Michalski

Katie Moore
Landon Shultz
John Spady
Julie Segal Walters

First segment of the call: introduction by Sandy

Sandy took about 10 minutes to provide an overview of NCDD conferences (what they are like, what makes them different from most conferences, a few things planning team members should know). She also shared some of her hopes for the 2008 conference with the group. Notes from this segment of the call are posted online at www.thataway.org/events/?p=49.

Second segment of the call: introductions all around

Planning team members were asked to say their name, where they're from, and what they do (briefly!), and then tell us why they joined the planning team and what they hope to contribute to the planning process. If they are unsure about what they might contribute at this point, they were invited to share what their hopes are for the conference.

Katie Moore

- Los Angeles. Works with young people - Serbia, Czech Republic, Russia
- Is interested in international educational processes – especially in deliberative democracy
- Presently involved with 11 foreign partner sites
- Wishes to learn practices to move her work beyond the classroom and into the community
- Believes D&D is key to a healthy society
- She has conference planning experience
- Would like to retain international perspective at NCDD Conference

Julie Segal Walters

- America Speaks – Democracy Lab
- New to the field and wants opportunity to learn more
- Hope for conference – Understanding and helping others understand importance of civic engagement and that deliberative democracy is one tool for supporting civic engagement
- Especially interested in bridging deliberation and action

Janet Fiero

- Also with America Speaks; designs large town meetings on subjects that impact people's lives, i.e. health care, etc.

- Would like to bring Appreciative Inquiry to the conference – exposing people to a new method and uplifting people's energy at the conference

Barbara Heffernan

- Independent consultant, new to D&D community
- Learned about NCDD at CaliforniaSpeaks on August 11, 2007
- Involved in design, development and evaluation; interested in evaluation of D&D
- Wants to look at ways to take D&D to the mainstream

Roger Gregoire

- Facilitator and facilitator trainer
- Works with Socratic instruction in schools
- Krishnamurti led him to David Bohm and Bohmian Dialogue; intrigued by how dialogue contributes to consciousness
- Boston Urban Dialogue in 1990s, Bill Isaacs, Peter Senge
- Believes there has been tectonic shift away from pure dialogue towards dialogue and deliberation that is tied to political and collective action and change
- At the conference, wishes help revive Bohmian Dialogue; bring it into more substantive use
- Feels D&D should be highlighted as in international movement

Susan Stuart Clark

- Common Knowledge, San Rafael, CA
- Involved in D&D for 15+ years (civic education); worked with AmericaSpeaks, National Issues Forums, Viewpoint Learning, others
- Has had focus on civic education, voter education especially low-income, non-English speaking, etc.
- Now emphasizing work that addresses the relationship between the public and policy makers
- Teaming with Jacob Hess to reach out to social conservatives to provide more balance in our membership
- Wants conference planning to be sensitive to phrases such as "social justice" that might inadvertently signal to conservatives that NCDD is not for them – are there other ways to say the same thing?
- Hopes for conference: Appreciates high energy and use of the arts at NCDD conferences. Would like to see arts used at the conference in ways that people can replicate at home.
- Interested in AI and bringing dialogue into the mainstream, i.e. how to distill the essence of D&D for the mainstream.

Jacob Hess

- Although he describes himself as a D&D rookie, Jacob has taught three semesters of dialogue courses at the University of Illinois
- A social conservative, Jacob is looking for ways to package dialogue for social conservatives and others who tend to be suspicious of dialogue (thinking it is progressive and relativistic)

Jerry Michalski

- A techie who believes in human beings, and a practitioner of group process
- Fan of Open Space, Bohm dialogue, Quaker meeting, Appreciative Inquiry
- Feels we are in the process of weaving new processes into society and the business world and that public values are shifting. New skills are evolving that can lead to self-governance in our society. Therefore, new interactive skills and forms of organisation are required.
- He prefers self-governance over big government governance
- He would like to build lasting on-line resources i.e. a Wiki catalogue that would elaborate on NCDD streams
- He would like to bring people to the conference, i.e. democratic organisations, conservatives, libertarians, business persons, etc.

Kevin Leahy

- Lawyer who has been engaging in dialogue with clients for the past 15 years, using Socratic method mostly
- A people person interested in implications of web technology
- Hopes for Austin – take advantage of current Web technologies to connect dialogue folks
- He is willing to share Socratic Method and experiences

John Spady

- Forum Foundation Seattle, WA
- Co-sponsor of NCDD conferences past – and this one
- Promoted initiative at King County (includes Seattle) to build small group dialogues as adjunct to public meeting process to discuss policy issues
- Has currently registered 1000 people for an upcoming event
- Would like to be a resource for the Conference (offers Forum Fdn's survey tools at no charge)
- <http://www.countywidecommunityforums.org/>

Landon Shultz

- Pastor of Bluebonnet Hills Christian Church in Austin, TX

- Has replaced sermons with dialogue
- Helps people to grow individually and spiritually through open dialogue which he believes is better than telling people what the answers are
- Believes D&D have a profound impact on who we are as a society and that we must move beyond debate
- Hopes to use D&D in the public sector to come up with answers to social problems that are workable and sustainable
- Would like to look for ways to talk with persons we do not agree with to achieve sustainable solutions to big problems.
- Has worked with Education Equals Economics (E3) Alliance dialogue process, involving Austin and 5 nearby school districts. As a follow up to the E3 dialogues, is facilitating a project at a local high school to create productive information flow between public school classrooms and state and national legislatures.
- He is integrating conservatives and liberals in his work.
- Wants to give the NCDD conference a "bigger stage" - attracting people who are in the public light to the conference

Sharon Almerigi

- Living in Barbados
- Facilitator who teaches facilitation skills.
- Likes the idea of threads or streams at the conference
- Wants to see us dialogue with people we don't agree with

Gilles Asselin

- Lives in New Jersey – near Princeton
- 14 years cross-cultural relations; interest in dialogue came from Calling the Circle and Community Building (Scott Peck)
- Interested in affirming native traditions
- Has done intercultural training and research
- Likes working behind the scenes

Third segment of the call: discussion/brainstorming

- John would be interested in seeing representatives from political parties at the conference.
- Janet suggested we depart from past conferences and choose a theme. Suggested an issue like Climate Change could be the theme.

We discussed some pros and cons for this idea for a few minutes...

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may give carrot for some elected people to attend. • Should take advantage of the timing which is a month before the election. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to establish one theme – but a theme might be considered in a broader way. “Using the arts of democracy build a culture of collaboration,” for example • Narrowing the theme may turn some people away.

- Susan said Health Care is another important issue. Take advantage of upcoming election. Let’s take a single issue and demonstrate how you can find common ground on thorny issues. Invite campaigns to observe.
- Jerry would like to see pragmatic topics as themes. Interview folks about “What should the inaugural speech include?” and “What would you say if you were giving the inaugural speech” (related to public engagement). Ask people to post their speeches on YouTube.
- Landon suggesting having 4-5 different themes on global warming, health care, racism/social justice, and education, media consolidation, net-neutrality, etc.
- Sharon suggested an additional thread (or two threads?) on media consolidation and net neutrality.
- Rogier brought up race relations and human relations. We are fractured and isolated, dialogue can help with this. Change society and change oneself – these things are not mutually exclusive. Embrace wholeness. Need to improve relationships and transform ourselves.
- Jerry appreciates Rogier’s comments. Bridging opposites and bringing people together can create a resilient society. Inaugural speech mentioned earlier should be composed in collaboration with person of opposite opinions.
- Sandy likes threads that allow deeper conversation. Some threads should focus on the growth and effectiveness of D&D (like evaluation, or bringing D&D to the mainstream) - not just social issues.
- Rogier concerned about institutional racism.
- Sandy commented that institutional racism should be part of the thread focused on racism and social justice. Sandy also suggests working before the conference to synthesize information about the thread topics (what do we already know about evaluation; what has been accomplished?) and get people who sign up for the threads up to speed rather than trying to start fresh
- Susan is interested in how we think through major social issues. Can we demonstrate common ground as an antidote to the polarization emphasized in the media? Possibly demonstrate multiple methodologies on the same issue. Get media coverage.
- Landon wants to see models for respectful listening and hearing across ideational barriers; not as interested in finding common ground.
- Janet wants to see us listen especially on controversial issues.
- Sandy suggested that a plenary focused on an issue could be focused on the partisan divide rather than an issue like health care or climate change.
- Susan asks whether we should choose a topic that illustrates the political divide (and bridging the divide) rather than focusing on the political divide itself as a topic
- John wonders how we identify political conservatives and liberals coming to the conference. A self-select spectrum, that people can opt out on?

- Susan raises the possibility of bringing in local folks to participate in dialogue on the selected issue (to help ensure the diversity of perspectives and show how dialogue works with “real” people).
- Rogier comments that a one-time shot of Bohmian dialogue may not be sufficient. Wants us to be careful about labels.
- Kevin likes idea of threads, and comments that we need to focus on what matters at the conference, and what matters to people at any one time changes and shifts

Before closing the call Sandy got Landon, John and Jerry to commit to exploring how we can bring in representatives from the political parties. Then she thanked everyone for participating and commented that it was a wonderful call and that she is looking forward to working with everyone to plan the 2008 conference.