

## Sharing Our Wisdom

### *Frequently Asked Questions Regarding our Training Experiences*

#### 1. What are your goals as a Woven Traditions facilitator, working with participants interested in increasing their level of cultural competence and/or enhancing their leadership skills?

- My goal as a facilitator is to allow people to explore the idea that as humans we have differences and we naturally find comfort in seeking others that resemble our own racial background.
- Spark thinking. Some people have more internalized oppression than others; some have been more introspective about themselves and can move more quickly to greater understanding.
- Help people understand the importance of trusting and respecting yourself so you can work together with others to get things done.
- To recognize and feel within themselves that they are of worth, can advocate for themselves, and work with others to support each other, and see the leadership within themselves.
- Provide information relevant to participants' experiences that they can use in their living, learning, and working environments.
- For participants to explore ways in which we actually participate in the process of *social change*.
- A goal I have as a facilitator is to help the participants move from their current point of view to a broader point, possibly one they never considered.
- Helping people grow in tolerance, compassion, and consideration of cultural factors that they may have been unaware of in their past.
- To help participants understand where they are currently with regards to cultural competency.
- To lead participants to a place of active self-reflection and to feel comfortable and confident to share this with others.
- To open their minds to thinking that there might be more than one way of thinking.
- While I do have some general goals, whenever I work with a new group I first try to take a couple of steps back – to really hear where people are and go from there – and not to assume people are where I am.
- My main ingredient is communication, which involves speaking, listening, and interpretation of what is said and heard. My goal is to recognize and try to meet the needs of **the participant** (CEO, Superintendent, manager, director, leaders, teachers, parents, students, supervisors, etc.,) and the community in which they live and work.
- Spark a change process that will result in people becoming self-reflective about who they are, their own biases, how they work with children, families, colleagues, and other stakeholders within the organization.
- Make sure that we begin and maintain a level of honesty, even with the toughest conversations.
- To:
  - Cultivate self-exploration and critical thinking in order to set each individual on a path of self-discovery leading to the appreciation of self and others.
  - Engage in mutual learning.
  - Start where the individual's interests are.
  - Strive for social consciousness.
- As a facilitator I am attempting to convey to the participants compassion, truth, and knowledge with intent to engage them with honest and open conversation toward learning and acquiring knowledge.

## 2. What are your essential understandings you want your participants to take away from your training sessions?

- To be able to listen. This is part of the building process of becoming aware of culture and we as facilitators, must be comfortable with each stage of our participants' understanding of culture and not judge others for being disingenuous.
- Bias does exist.
- Understanding where bias comes from and how to work through it, to challenge and change it in ourselves, is what creates strength.
- How to educate others to change. We all carry cultural baggage which influences or relationships with our learners, our learners' families, our co-workers, etc.
- It is critical to get ourselves to a comfort level in order to begin a real dialogue beyond the surface level, beyond being "PC" **Politically Correct** – even for that brief moment in time of a session.
- In that class, I state that one is born into an already existing culture. In essence, one inherits the past, interacts and lives in the present and attempts to shape the future. We examine the past (history) to understand how we got to this point. Of course, we live and react to the present. Very importantly, we anticipate and put our efforts into creating a desired future.
- That we all have a culture and how that culture effects our actions and thinking. I want people to know they can change their ideas and concepts through education and exploration.
- An appreciation and awareness of other cultures, how they interact in our everyday life. A willingness to consider a person's culture, ability, or economic situation, when reaching to another human being.
- There is always my perspective, your perspective, and the missing perspective.
- The guiding principles for constructive dialogue.
- The understanding that, independent of ethnicity, culture, ability, economic class or political persuasion, we owe each human being the respect accorded to that individual as a member of the human race.
- I would also hope we achieve the understanding of social awareness, that we are deeply embedded in each other's dreams and problems, making it imperative that we stand up for each other.
- Achieve the understanding and enlightenment to accept each other despite our faults and limitations, not worshipping ourselves so much that we would expect everyone to be our clones.
- My hope is that the participant will **engage and actively participate** in the training but most importantly the information acquired can be used in their classroom or work environment.

### 3. What training methods have worked best?

- Open dialogue
- Dialogue
- Presenting scenarios and working in small groups to address them
- One-on-one or small group informal discussions after a presentation to process something that happened, or that came up for them.
- The team approach
- Using triads and dyads
- Reflection on personal history and experiences
- Journaling
- Hands-on activities to let people's voices to be heard
- Not lecturing alone – must involve hands-on experiences
- Not trying to do too much at one time
- The method is one of discussion and sharing perspectives. It is important to discuss an act and the different meanings attached to that particular act to different observers to that act. Past experiences, present purposes, and the act or object itself, will determine the meaning each individual attaches to the act or object.
- Making training personal, capitalizing on people to have a safe, comfortable environment to participate.
- The authenticity of myself and my fellow consultants. Sharing openly and honestly about ourselves help put participants at ease.
- Interaction, participation, and positive reinforcement.
- Using engaging activities.
- Group interaction
- Self-reflection
- Service learning
- Stimulating divergent thinking by having small groups do problem solving
- Ask for the participants' input into the content and process
- Using lots of resources
- Not inundating people
- Teaming
- Call and Response
- Like to give people something they can take away to continue the reflection process
- Not lecturing (*My experiences have shown that participants do not want to be just fed information, they want to engage in the conversation.*)
- The descriptive theories along with real life examples and corresponding activities. The workshop activities are essential to participants internalizing the information. Examples include: Privilege Walk, Cultural Doll, and the "I Am From..." poem.

#### 4. What do you use as indicators of the impact of your work on participants?

- When participants acknowledge the errors in their ways and make an effort to correct them.
- During a session, I look for signs that people have caught the concept: are able to articulate for themselves, are able to voice a different opinion than mine or challenging a point of mine. Then I know honesty is happening and that people got the critical thinking concept of cultural competency education and leadership development.
- Beyond a training session, I look for teachers to take the work back into their classrooms.
- Using their voice, speaking to what they may not have had a chance to say before.
- Feeling validated in their experiences/feelings from someone who talks the same language.
- Getting follow-up calls or emails: Something to the effect – “I want help to begin what you talked about.”
- Right after the training, people come up to talk more – that tells me I have touched that person in some way.
- The quality of the interaction and discussion between myself and the class serve as indicators of the impact of the work. It is not one directional. I, being much older than the others, benefit from their perspective and I hope they benefit from my perspective.
- Reactions and evaluations. Watching a physical change in the participants’ manner and their responses to the activities. Listening to the stories that participants share and how they apply what they experienced from the activities.
- Personal journal entries
- Pre/Post Assessments, Each session/s Self- Assessment/s
- In-class discussions
- People being honest, sharing experiences, feelings and thoughts beyond the surface level of the “correct or polite thing to say.”
- Breaking down hostile attitudes. Seeing people beginning to be honest about their pain.
- People who stay behind after the training to talk with me, one-on-one. This says to me that something has been ignited – even if the person may not yet be conscious of just what it is. But they want to share something, to get acknowledgement for what they are feeling.
- A need being expressed.
- People sharing their stories – making connections to their work.
- The realization that there is a lot more to cultural competency work and leadership development than the “recipe” answers people look for at first.
- The verbal responses and comments during the training along with written feedback from the evaluation sheets.

### 5. What hard issues/challenges have you faced in your training?

- I find it challenging when others may find it difficult to understand that we all have biases.
- The biggest challenge for me is to resist the temptation to *dish out* an ideal. I make myself wait for the process of discovery and growth to take place in a developmental manner, allowing each individual to grow by the beat of his or her own drum.
- There have been no hard issues or challenges.
- Time is always a challenge. There is so much to share and yet you don't want to not give everyone an opportunity to participate.
- Realizing that each individual is on their own personal journey, and, therefore, will hear messages in different ways at different times.
- Balancing the dialogue in the room. While you don't want to stifle a person, not letting them say what they need to say, you have to create a balance in the room, where you can hear from everyone.
- I am always concerned about articulating the information in a clear and concise manner. Also, I feel a need to continue to study to remain current and prepared for the next opportunity.

### 6. What do you do when you encounter cultural conflicts between participants?

- When conflict occurs, my job as a facilitator is to keep the group on task and remind them that we must respect the fact that we are all exploring and understanding our view of each other. I continue to remind them that respecting the display of courage to share our journey with one another, allows the opportunity for all of us to grow and learn. Setting the goals in the beginning and reviewing them throughout the discussion helps limit conflict.
- I know I need to stay detached and acknowledge that two dynamics are going on: individual feelings – and what is exactly happening. Feelings have to be accepted/and discussed first. It is important not to allow personalization. (Not trying to just give my input, but to allow the participants to talk things out and share what they think, in a safe environment.) I may also have to deal with different styles of responding to conflicts. Then I try to guide people to go back to the issues as they connect to the training and what we can do to *move on* and not stay *stuck*.
- I attempt to facilitate a better understanding of what the various perspectives might be. In that regard, the question is asked, “do you see what I see?”
- Remind the group of our parameters of a safe environment. Keep people on topic. Remind everyone of honoring all perspectives.
- Bring us back to “my perspective, your perspective, and the missing perspective.”
- Douse the fire first.
- Try to look at all perspectives.
- Help the group to establish an environment that is thoughtful of each other's opinions.
- I remind myself to remain professional at all times and to listen to what is being said; and then respond to the conversations based on information and data that is being presented.

**7. What sustains you in this work?**

- My understanding that “freedom is not free” keeps me involved in this line of work. I believe all of us share in the responsibility of building a free society that allows all of humanity to learn and thrive. I just choose to serve by facilitating discussions on culture because I believe in the power of communicating and understanding how our individual experiences impact our view of the world and each other.
- Social Justice is important to me.
- My own growth, energy, and excitement I get from my own thinking and expansion of my understanding.
- Seeing a development of ownership, seeing people get a sense of their knowledge, skills, and leadership.
- My inner spirit – knowing who I am and my purpose of life.
- Always more work and new steps to take: this keeps me challenged.
- Looking at the politics in our society, looking at the intentional arena, nothing could be more important than a very thoughtful examination of how each of us “sees what we see.”
- I believe education is the key to a civilized society. I thrive on being a part of the learning dynamic. I believe in our curriculum and its importance. It makes me feel good about myself.
- The journals and conversations of the students.
- Seeing another person’s realization of their self-worth and the steps taken toward their own liberation.
- The feeling you get when you see people “getting it.”
- The challenge that I constantly feel to continue to improve what we do.
- Knowing that our work truly brings about positive growth.
- The dialogue from the participants. Often times the conversations are quite “deep” and challenge not only the participants’ thinking, but mine as well, as the facilitator.