

YOUTH VOICES OUTREACH MANUAL



2013

How to organize an inter-faith youth group

This is not a typical manual.

It wasn't written by a famous author, or even a single author, but by members of the Sacred Water Circle (SWC), who collaboratively contributed to the words on these pages. This how-to-manual is based on our experience reaching out to young adults of different faiths and backgrounds to rally around a common cause.

GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION

Contributions from an incredible number of people shaped this manual. Before it even began, several people and organizations gave their time, vision, and guidance, including; long time mentors, like Dorothy Taylor of Curve Lake First Nation, founder of the Sacred Water Circle, and Kristeen McTavish, Director of the TRACKS program at Trent University. We were also inspired by our honored 2012 Gathering Speakers and Water Warriors: Grandmother Josephine Mandamin, Elders Shirley Williams and Sylvia Plain, Elder Doug Williams, Sharyn Inward, Dr. Paul Frost, Dr. Lisa Kraemer and Nimkii Osawamick as well as our friends from Faith & the Common Good's: Greening Sacred Spaces, GreenUP, Fleming College and Trent University.

All Sacred Water Circle Members and our authors contributed time, energy, creativity, and humour to the creation of this manual. The authors are Robyn Smith Youth Coordinator, Alix Taylor Project Coordinator and Cathy Mitchell Huels Project Advisor for the Sacred Water Circle Youth Voices Project 2013. We are grateful to all the participants and mentors of the YV project that contributed their time, ideas, photos or their motivational quotes that will help inspire others to start up interfaith youth groups in other communities. These people include Willie Willis, Caitlin Barratt, Heather Brooks-Hill, Elder Shirley Williams, Cheryl Lyon, Chris Welter, Christian Harvey and the Abraham Festival Committee.

We are also thankful for the generous heaps of time contributed by our brilliant editor Sheryl Loucks.

Gchi-Miigwech to our project partners and supporters whose generosity made it possible for so many youth and young adults to attend the Sacred Water Circle Gathering in 2013: Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Trent University Indigenous Studies, Fleming College, Fleming College Student Administrative Council, Rotary Club of Peterborough, Trent Central Student

Association, Township of Otonabee South Monaghan, Selwyn Township and the City of Peterborough.

Last, but certainly not least, we want to thank the Inspirit Foundation without which the YV Project and Outreach Manual would not have been possible.

Thank you.

With our fullest, warmest gratitude and appreciation,

The Youth Voices Team

YOUTH VOICES

The Youth Voices Project was created in response to feedback from young people who attended the first SWC Gathering in 2012. Young participants said they felt overwhelmed by environmental and social justice issues that they were facing in today's society. Our goal was to create an initiative that would be a source of strength and stability that would link diverse young people together, building bridges across faith traditions, where friendships and solutions could be discovered together.

YV became a dynamic group when young people from a variety of faiths and backgrounds came together to discuss water issues and taking meaningful environmental actions based on their beliefs. The Inspirit Foundation generously funded this initiative in partnership with Trent Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge Science Youth Program, Faith & the Common Good and GreenUP in Peterborough. YV worked in conjunction with the SWC, a group of people led by Indigenous people and principles of inclusion and respect for water. This manual discusses our initial steps of developing our group and the first sparks of meaningful conversations.

We do not claim to be experts in inter-faith youth outreach, rather we want to share the lessons we have learned in the hopes that you can build upon them.

We appreciate the support from the following organizations:



Inspirit Foundation

A national, grant-making organization that supports young people (aged 18 to 30) in building a more inclusive and pluralist Canada.



Sacred Water Circle

Inspired by traditional teachings, the Sacred Water Circle leads with hope and spiritual courage. It consists of community volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds, skills, and spiritual beliefs, who are bonded by a common vision - to restore the sacred relationship of humanity with water.



TRACKS Youth Program

Trent Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Science

A youth outreach program developed at Trent University in association with the Indigenous Environmental Studies Program that bridges different ways of knowing with a particular emphasis on melding western science and cultural environmental knowledge.



GreenUP

For over 20 years this community organization and registered charity has actively provided environmental programming to help create a lasting impact for businesses, schools, organizations, and citizens.



Faith & the Common Good

A national interfaith network that through collaboration and interfaith dialogue creates educational resources and tools while providing services that support faith communities for ecological achievements.

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This manual is written in a progression that reflects our first steps of working with the YV group. Working together is a journey, and like a CANOE trip, sometimes the waves are rough, sometimes you're carried by the current, and sometimes your boat flips! But if you're a good navigator, are well prepared, and have good friends along for the ride, you can usually get yourself back on track. We hope this manual will be seen as a 'guide' that will set you and your group up for an awesome journey!



Water is life. Regardless of our differences, truth is truth, and it speaks to us all. Common ground and goals bring people of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds together.

- Cathy Mitchell-Huels

SECTION 1: WHY A SPIRITUALLY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP?



Starting an inter-faith youth project is a great way to build understanding between young people from different backgrounds in your community. On an individual level, inter-faith youth groups bring together young people with different beliefs and give them a chance to meet, talk, and take part in shared activities. They help young people of different faiths and backgrounds to build friendships and find out about each other's values and beliefs. On a community level, collaborating to find how different ideas and views can come together to form a unified voice has the greatest potential for creating a movement or `ripple` that will speak to an entire community.

However, setting up an inter-faith and multicultural project can be intimidating. Who will take part and what will you do in the meetings? Will young people feel comfortable enough together to talk about their beliefs?

This section hopes to give you confidence and ideas.

Giving youth the experience of working together, no matter their faith backgrounds, on a common service or project of their choice will help focus the group and provide direction. Young people today are well connected and informed. They often have deep-rooted agendas and ideas about what they wish to change in their local and global communities. Get youth around the table and give them a platform to express themselves and prepare to be amazed.

The key as an organizer is not to push your agenda, but to listen to the profound wisdom that young people have to offer. Pay close attention. Create the agenda around their ideas and goals. Validation and motivation will help encourage them to do great things – not just on the project at hand, but in life in general.

Youth Voices, (YV), members often discussed what spirituality meant to their discussions about water issues. Within this group young people from all walks of life met regularly to discuss water through the lens of spirituality and each member had a unique understanding of their relationship with water. The group agreed that their love and respect for water was based in spirituality. As the group developed, they realized many members had grown up with no religion, or defined spirituality, but they craved this connection with “spirit” and with people who also wanted to have these kinds of discussions.

They realized communion with nature and seeing the environment as sacred is something that most people share, regardless of religious or spiritual beliefs – even if they had not consciously thought about it that way before.

YV Members believe that *caring for the environment builds a spiritual connection to it and this reverence bridges cultures and religion.*

Why a group? The problems of the world, environmental or otherwise, can seem insurmountable. We create better solutions when we are able to look at things from various perspectives. The exercise of building relationships, despite our differences, can heal communities.

We chose to create our group based on principles of inter-faith dialogue because the environmental movement is stronger with the inclusion of spirituality but only a spirituality that includes all of our voices. If we, as young people, can see each other’s similarities first, and respect the differences that define each of us, we can share strengths that have the potential to benefit us all.

Why a water focus? Water is a theme that flows in and around all the world's major religions and spiritual paths. Without it we would be more than in over our heads – we would be high and dry, up the creek without a paddle, and lacking a really important link to the spiritual realm.

“As humans who grew in our mothers’ wombs, water was our first home, and our most important medicine. It was important for us to join YV to help us remember our living connections with water and to each other. What a powerful experience, to have so many voices weaving together, saying different things but all feeling the same love, gratitude, and sense of protection for the water!” says Robyn Smith, Youth Coordinator.

Water quality and quantity is highly threatened, and thus our existence as humans and the well-being of all life, depends on our generation taking responsibility. We must make changes in our own life, and we must also encourage our friends and families to do the same. Part of the work in the SWC, and in YV, was to raise awareness about environmental threats to water and actions to conserve and improve our waters. However, the focus of our work was to think less with our heads, and feel more with our hearts, to use spirituality (however we chose to define it) to heal ourselves and give us strength so we could continue to do good work.

While we typically think of water as a “resource”, conversations from YV revolved around the idea that water is much more than this– it is a sacred entity. We all live with water. Water is not just something that exists within the environment, but is within ourselves. Prayer for the water in our bodies, the water in our taps, and the water in our communities creates ripples that can create a sea of change!



“The Indigenous People of North and South America are calling for action to bring balance to the world. The health and well-being of water is critical to achieving and regaining that balance. A plan of action is required now with prayer and spiritual beliefs leading the way.”

– DOROTHY TAYLOR, SACRED WATER CIRCLE FOUNDER AND PROJECT LEAD

“I CAME TO THE FIRST YV MEETING AFTER HEARING DOROTHY TAYLOR SPEAK AT A CONFERENCE. SHE TALKED ABOUT THE KOGI, THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF THE SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA IN COLOMBIA, WHO ARE KNOWN AS THE "ELDER BROTHERS." SHE TALKED ABOUT THE TRAVELS THAT SOME OF THEM HAVE MADE TO WARN THE "YOUNGER BROTHERS," THE MODERN WESTERN WORLD, OF THE MESS WE HAVE MADE AND THE DANGER WE ARE ALL IN. I THOUGHT THAT WAS SUPER COOL. IT WAS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL NARRATIVE AND SOLUTION TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY--THE WISE ROOTS OF HUMANKIND SIMPLY NEEDED TO STEP IN AND GIVE US A TIME-OUT.

EVEN COOLER WAS THE FACT THAT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WORLDWIDE SEEMED TO SHARE IN THIS ROLE, ALLOWING FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AND PERHAPS LARGE-SCALE CHANGE. THIS WAS THE TIDY LITTLE VISION THAT HOOKED ME. HOWEVER, ACTUALLY GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS WITH THE GROUP BROUGHT UP SOME MUDDINESS, AND MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS. SPIRITUALITY VERSUS ACTION?

FAITH AND PRAYER VERSUS LOGIC AND SCRUTINY? HOW DO WE ACTUALLY DO THIS WORK? ALL QUESTIONS WITH "SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE" AS ANSWERS, AND NONETHELESS CRUCIAL TO GO THROUGH THAT MUDDY CONFUSION AND DEBATE. BUT MOST OF ALL, LOOKING BACK AT THE SMART, GOOD-NATURED, AND COMMITTED PEOPLE WHO GATHERED THOSE NIGHTS, IT GOES TO SHOW THE SIMPLE POWER OF GATHERING PEOPLE TOGETHER."

-WILLIE WILLIS, YV PARTICIPANT

Our inter-faith partners:

Faith & the Common Good is a national inter-faith organization that hosts a network of faith communities, events and resources for inter-faith dialogue and environmental sustainability. Through dialogue, research, network building, education, and advocacy, they are building a process to bring the diversity of Canadian perspectives into a voice of common concern for social, economic, and ecological well-being for all.

Faith & the Common Good developed the Greening Sacred Spaces Program to assist faith communities to take actions to create a more sustainable and energy efficient place of worship, and to educate members of the community about ecological issues.

www.greeningsacredspaces.net

The Abraham Festival, Peterborough ON is a gathering of the spiritual descendants of Abraham. They are Jews, Christians, and Muslims that have been meeting in the City of Peterborough for 10 years in the spirit of joy. They wonder at their similarities and differences, discovering they are spiritual cousins. This grass-roots movement builds relationships, hosts events, and open worship services to festival goers each year.

www.abrahamfestival.org

North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) builds communication and mutual understanding among inter-faith organizations and diverse religious groups throughout North America. NAIN Young Adults are a network of young leaders passionate about inter-faith engagement through social media, a series of educational online conference calls, a mailing list, and an annual gathering NAIN connect.

<http://nain.org/>

Interfaith Observer (TIO) It is a monthly e-journal telling new stories, exploring new issues, identifying exemplary resources, and connecting groups and individuals to each other. TIO looks for the big picture while providing hundreds of links to particular opportunities.

<http://theinter-faithobserver.org/>

Scarboro Missions is a Society of Canadian Catholics, priests and laity in touch with local, national and international inter-faith activity and networks. Scarboro Missions has developed a poster featuring the Golden Rule in the sacred writings of 13 religious traditions.

<https://www.scarboromissions.ca/>

The Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care is a not-for-profit, charitable organization representing a wide range of faith groups in the province of Ontario dedicated to advocacy of spiritual care and the protection of religious rights.

<http://www.omc.ca/>

Inter-faith Environmental Exercises

One of our favorite resources for inter-faith activities is the Green Rule Poster Study Guide from the Faith & the Common Good's Greening Sacred Spaces Program. The Green Rule Poster and Study Guide is derived from the classic Golden Rule found in major faith traditions. For the Green Rule they are paraphrasing the Golden Rule by saying: "do unto the earth as you would have it do unto you."

Selected from many of the world's great religious texts and spiritual teachings, the Green Rules were chosen to demonstrate that each religion and spiritual philosophy has a long-standing tradition of ecological stewardship.

The Green Rule Poster and Study Guide are available on the Greening Sacred Spaces Website (www.greeningsacredspaces.net) under tools and resources.

SECTION 2: ATTRACTING PARTNERS AND MEMBERS

The first thing you need to do is gather some interested people to start your group. While it is important to have a vision, goals, and theme for your initiative, it is also important to further develop these as a group – particularly when there is one person coordinating. It is important that, even if only one person is doing most of the organization and administrative tasks for the group, they are not making unilateral decisions on how the group is run. It is a good idea to be flexible about these concepts.

For instance, you might approach people with the idea that you want to look at water from a spiritual perspective. The people who join your initiative might decide that they want to look more specifically at a part of an issue, such as challenging policy through cooperation with the major faith-based organizations. They might decide to look more generally at spiritual ecology, with water only being one focus. Unless you want to be working on your own, chances are you're going to have to compromise!

Having one or two people from the get-go to share duties is important for providing support and preventing the coordinator and/or volunteers from burning out. Getting cooperation and community support right off the bat will be invaluable. Even if they are folks who don't intend to stick around throughout the process, it's so important to have a few people to bounce ideas off of and help get things rolling!



*Nimkii Osawamik and Robyn Smith,
YV Coordinators*

Cast the net wide: Try every avenue to recruit and engage other young people. If your goal is to engage a variety of people in your initiative, it can't just be you and your buddies sitting around the table. If you are trying to reach a wide audience beyond your social circle, it's important to think about who else may be interested. That said, you can work within certain parameters, or focus on specific types of diversity– are you very interested in multi-generational dialogue? Would gay-straight partnerships be a focus of your group? If youth engagement is a particular aspect of what you want to do, then maybe older people could participate in a different way. Perhaps queer issues might not be of explicit focus in your group, but you should certainly welcome and accept people who identify as such.

When you are getting started don't limit your search, expand it. Use online search terms like Faith Youth Groups in your geographic area, or if you have a particular focus like we did, consider getting in touch with existing charities, social justice groups, student associations, and environmental organizations to tap into their networks.

Here is a list of groups in our local area that might also exist in your community:

Youth Groups in our local region, Peterborough ON:

Abraham Festival <http://www.abrahamfestival.org/>

Church Youth Groups, (your geographical region) (Search online using these words)

Fleming College Student Administrative Council <http://flemingsac.ca/>

Food Not Bombs <http://foodnotbombspeterborough.org/>

Jamaican Self Help <http://www.jshcanada.org/>

Kawartha Muslim Religious Association <http://kmra.org/>

Kawarthas World Issues Center <http://www.kwic.info/>

The New Canadian Center <http://www.nccpeterborough.ca/>

OPIRG – Ontario public Interest Research Group www.opirgpeterborough.ca

Peterborough Community Garden Network <http://ptbocommgardennetwork.blogspot.ca/>

Peterborough Youth Council – <http://www.ptboyouth.com/>

Peterborough Youth Services <http://www.peterboroughyouthservices.ca/>

Rainbow Youth Coalition www.rainbowyouth.ca/

Sustainable Trent <http://www.trentu.ca/stuorg/sustainabletrent/>

Trent Central Student Association <http://trentcentral.ca/>

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough <http://www.peterboroughunitarian.ca/>

Luring the fish: People respond to advertising in different ways, and it's important to try as many avenues as you can. A Facebook group/event made public (make sure to ask your friends to like/suggest/add you!) and widely shared could be one of the best methods of advertising right now, but don't stop there or you'll miss the great people who are not on Facebook (yes, they do exist!).

A well-placed hand-made banner, chalking around town, an eye-catching flash mob (a group of people who assemble suddenly in a public place, perform an unusual act for a brief time, and then quickly disperse, often for the purposes of entertainment, satire, promotion and artistic expression, example: <http://econsultancy.com/ca/blog/8548-12-great-examples-of-flash-mobs>) or people-powered word-of-mouth canvassing in a public space– all of these are creative ways to get people talking about your group. More conventional approaches include brightly coloured posters, newspaper advertisements in the classifieds, a posting in Kijiji's Community pages, or being featured in print media, TV or on a radio interview. A media release should be sent out with any interesting activities you are taking part in or even just a call out for interested members to join.

Hint: *Make your initial advertising brief and specific enough to avoid confusion, but vague enough to be open and intriguing– since you are still in the developing stages, a few key words, plus logistical details, should be enough to bring people out.*

Examples of **Facebook posts** from the YV Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/108431572660452/>

1. Please share this page widely and invite your friends... the more the merrier. We meet to plan events and action, and also to share gratitude and good thoughts to work on behalf of water!

If you have any events, resources or activities related to water, please feel free to share.

-
2. Hey YV supporters! If you have a minute today, come hang out with us on the bridge as we offer water and good thoughts to passer-by's on the bridge at Trent- and if you have an extra ten minutes, you can help us out by taking a load of cups to be washed and replaced!

We are using mugs from the [Seasoned Spoon](#) and when they get dirty we can just take them back there and get new ones- so, if you can help out at all even with just one load during the day, that would be amazing!!

Happy World Water Day!

-
3. Thanks to all for all your postings about water to celebrate World Water Day- we had so much fun hanging out on the bridge last Friday and connecting with people over a shared love for water and life.

Let's keep this momentum going forward and practice gratitude toward water every day!! Swing by the Spill tonight if you can, 7:30pm-9:00pm and share space with us!

Targeted outreach: Utilize resources of your focus demographic– so, if spirituality is a main component, connect with youth groups in churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and spiritually–based groups of all kinds. If you have a group, like YV, that focuses on intersecting beliefs (i.e. faith and environment) make sure to connect with groups that focus on each of these factors. Spiritual organizations will deal with very different issues than the local environmental advocacy group, but they will both be of use to you and maybe you can help them connect with each other. If you are very lucky there will be a group or two that already talks about both of these interests!

If you live in a college or university town, make sure to connect with the groups in these schools (for example YV contacted faith groups and environmental clubs) and often they will be able to put you in touch with other groups. Advertise through organizations that might not be directly focused on what you do, but who might be interested. Indigenous organization like Friendship Centres, centres for new Canadians, poverty–action networks, women’s groups, and other similar organizations might be able to provide you with a good support system. They may also have people who might want to join your cause. For a youth–oriented group, try homeschooling networks, youth action groups, and high schools.

A note on inclusion:

In North American what we think of as “the environmental movement” has often been criticized for largely being made up of white, middle class, school educated folks. If this doesn’t sit right with you, make sure that your group challenges this by promoting a culture of diversity and actively seeking people with a wide range of perspectives.

Make sure to make your group accessible physically and financially. Connect with at–risk youth and folks with differing levels of abilities and work hard to make the ‘conditions’ for your meetings and events physically accessible (i.e. have meeting locations that can be navigated by wheelchairs or walkers etc.) and financially accessible (i.e. keep costs for members as low as possible– for example for our end of the year SWC Gathering we worked hard to obtain financial support to cover the cost of youth attending the event).

Some things you just can't do online:

Making connections can be hard. The internet helps us work efficiently but doesn't have the same impact as a face-to-face connection. People and groups don't always respond online, perhaps due to the sheer volume of emails, or maybe that group just isn't tech-savvy. It is a lot easier to connect with someone you can actually put a face to or in a pinch, a phone call also may work better than an email.

Faith-based organization in Peterborough were difficult to contact via email. Making personal connections with one or two people from that community helped to get to the folks in charge of youth groups or communications, who would help spread the word.

Put some time into going to events and getting to know people- it's time well-spent and you won't regret it! That said, use email widely and send a well-written missive to a variety of community mailing lists who will post on your behalf.

Marketing programs and events:

It has happened to all of us; you send out a poster to your entire network, only moments afterward (the design has been sent to print already) the small but critical errors in the date, the location, or the misspelling of names and guest speakers reveal themselves and are glaringly obvious. Our most precious advice when creating press releases, bookmarks, posters or any print marketing materials to promote your event is editing,

Press Release Resources and Templates:

How to Write a Killer Press Release, Friends of the Environment

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/how_tos/cyw_64_press_release.pdf

How to Write a Press Release, OXFAM Canada

<http://www.oxfam.ca/what-you-can-do/volunteer-with-oxfam/volunteer-toolkit/how-to-write>

Press Release Samples, pressreleases.com

<http://www.press-releases.com/press-release-sample.html>

editing, editing. Slow down; take the time now, instead of later. Find someone completely unrelated to the project to take a good slow read through.

Creating a good clean template that can easily be changed for each event is the best way to save time and resources. If you can afford to hire a professional, do so. It is well worth it – but be as sure and careful with your information when providing it to the designer as you would on your own publication. In this section are some of the YV publications for promotion of our project and events. If you need design technology there is a great resource for the voluntary sector called Tech Soup Canada, a branch of one of the oldest and largest nonprofit technology assistance agencies that offers design software packages at non-profit rates. www.techsoupcanada.ca

Bookmarks: Bookmarks are small and easy to carry as well as cost effective to print. Below are drafts of one that was created for YV and one for SWC.



Can you notice what five of us didn't in the review process of this bookmark shown above?



Posters: Posters are another excellent way to get information out about your initiative. The trick to a good poster is to balance the visual with the written content. A general rule is to never write too much— just the basics— what, where and when.

Gchi-Nibi Sacred Water Circle

Sacred Water Gathering

*Renewing the sacred balance,
leading with prayer and walking together*

dates
Wednesday May 8th
to Friday, May 10th

locations
Trent University (Gzowski College)
Hiawatha First Nation
Petroglyphs Provincial Park

**Join us at the 2nd Annual Sacred Water Gathering
as we honour our sacred water with ceremony,
workshops, panel discussions by First Nations teachers,
Youth Voices and local academics.**

**Come and help to create an action plan for
local solutions around water issues.**

For more information, directions and registration, please visit
www.sacredwater.ca/gathering

Volunteer and sponsorship opportunities are available.
If interested, please contact us through our website,
or email info@sacredwater.ca.





Sacred Water Gathering

*Renewing the sacred balance,
leading with prayer and walking together*

Trent University
Gzowski College
and other locations

May 8-10, 2013

Join the Sacred Water Gathering this May 8-10 to honour the sacredness of water with ceremony, keynote speakers, panel discussions, presentations, First Nations teachers, vendors, a traditional feast and other activities at various locations in the Kawarthas.

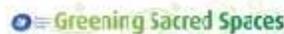
This dynamic three-day event is hosted each year by the Sacred Water Circle to bring together First Nations teachers and elders, political leaders, students, youth, water researchers, those in the water industry and the broader community to focus on water issues, awareness and solutions.

2013 will also see a focus on programming with Youth Voices on issues such as the value of sacred water, and initiatives to empower youth to take an active role in creating a sustainable future and healthy relationships with our water and regional watersheds.

For more information, or to register for this conference, please visit

www.sacredwater.ca/gathering

Volunteer and sponsorship opportunities are available. If interested, please contact Cathy Mitchell at Peterborough Greenup, 1-888-745-3238 ext. 201



Email etiquette:

Miss Manners' Guide to a Well-Written Email: your introductory email will be the first glimpse that most people get of your group. Make it friendly, to-the-point, clear, and inviting.

Example 1: A Terribly Discomforting Email

hey, so i want to start a group that will talk about environmental and spiritual issues. Does anyone else care? Because sometimes it seems like no one out there gives a darn and it drives me crazy when people (especially my family!!) don't realize how lucky we are to live in a country with so much fresh water and resources. And water is sacred!!!!

So if you want to come and talk about stuff then you can send me an email. If you are racist, classist, sexist, ableist, homophobic or otherwise oppressive don't bother. I'm also not interested in any bleeding heart hippies.

I figure we can meet in the library every couple weeks and talk about stuff and then maybe plan some action to decolonize the churches and put some pressure on our government to repeal those crappy bills and i'm not against violence to make it happen and if you don't agree you're obviously confused. if you're cool with this you're in

Psst- feel free to use either of these as a template. You'll have better luck with the 2nd email!

Example 2: A Gloriously Welcoming Email

Dear friends,

Yes, sometimes it seems like the world can be a scary place– but it is also a beautiful and sacred place. The more people who get together to remind each other of this, and think about what we can do to improve it, the better things will get!

My name is _____ and I do _____ (insert all those great things you do at work/school/play here). I am very interested in creating a welcoming, diverse, anti-oppressive space where we can talk about the environment from a multi-faith spiritual perspective and plan peaceful action around the protection of water. Other than that, I am open to suggestions, and hope that we will create the organizational structure, guidelines, and direction of this group together.

If interested, please send me an email or join us at the library at 111 Elm Street, every Monday at 5pm. Drop in anytime! Commitment is as much as you want it to be, no pressure to attend all meetings. Bring a friend, a snack, and feel free to spread the word to anyone who might be interested!

SECTION 3: GETTING PEOPLE TOGETHER

So you've got some folks on board. Congratulations! Now it is time to get them all together!

Meeting times: In terms of meetings, “when” can be a hard one to figure out. For your first meeting it is a good idea to just pick a date/time/place. Make sure to keep a good record of who has said they will be coming to the meeting and their contact information, so if you change the meeting time you can tell them. At YV, our first meeting was a Monday night at 7pm, which worked so well we just stuck with it. If you've received seven regrets and only two people show up, probably you want to change your venue or time. A polling site like Doodle (www.doodle.com) will let people easily identify their availability.

Unfortunately, if you live in a place where there are lots of things going on, it's very difficult to pick one time where everyone can meet. You have two options: you can keep a consistent day and time (easy to remember, more reliable for new members to drop-in), or you can alternate between two days. It's best if you can at least keep the time the same, but if you have people who are interested but unavailable on your chosen day, this makes it easier for them to attend. If there is one sad person who just can't make it out on your selected meeting day, keep that person updated by email and invite them to any events that are happening on other days.

Organizing events and other get-togethers on non-meeting days are also a good way to keep everyone engaged. Whatever you decide to do, do not organize a new time/day every meeting– it takes too much organizing and is confusing for everyone.

Location, location, location: So where should you have your meeting? This is an important decision, and can impact the number of members that attend your meeting and continue to attend meetings.

Finding the right space is a combination of form and function. Ideally you want a space that is cost free, physically accessible, easily reached by foot or public transit, with comfy seats, nice ambience, a place to get hot drinks or make your own, and enough space for everyone. You want it to be cozy and not cavernous, inviting but practical. **That said, sometimes you won't find an ideal space. If it's free, clean, and accessible, then it'll work!**

Holding meetings in the same place makes it easy to schedule and remember where you're going! You'll know the room, the facilities, and the folks who run it. You can also live it up and experience a new venue every week. A logistical challenge, but this is something to try if running into "home turf" situations is a concern. When you always hold meetings in a venue where some, but not all, of your group feels a sense of ownership or association, you risk alienating others. This is especially important for a diverse group, who come from very different parts of the community. If you choose to meet in a specific place every week, it makes it very easy for a hierarchy to start emerging. In this case, switch it up, and make sure you spend time in the Friendship Centre, the mosque, and wherever else group members can welcome you. It's great to let a different person play host every week, whether it be at their house or just in a space they feel connected to.

If you choose to meet in the same space, make sure it is a neutral one that doesn't have negative connotations for anyone – like a school gym or dentists office. Your group-mates might have similar qualms about certain sites, so make sure everyone is cool with the space. It's great to have a neutral space to return to because it will hold the energy of your group and what you are doing. In this kind of neutral space, even if you don't make any decorating improvements, you can still feel like you are creating the space together.

At YV we tried meeting in a board room of a not-for-profit: functional, but a bit sterile. We enjoyed meeting in a local café/bar, but found the long, narrow set-up made it hard to have round table discussions. We also found ourselves shouting over bands that were setting up. Eventually we ended up meeting at Robyn's house. Centrally located with lots of tea, it worked well but could sometimes be awkward with roommates coming in and out or the house phone ringing in the middle of a meeting. It was, however, free and accessible.

However, it can also be really nice to visit spaces that are special to the different people in your group. It may be a great way to get insights into peoples' lives and experiences. So again, this is something you have to discuss with your group. In either case, make sure to book your spaces well in advance. If you are hunkering down in the same space every two weeks, establish a running schedule with the proprietor or manager so they know to expect you. If you're switching it up, it is even more important that you book it **as soon as you decide**– don't take it for granted that the space will be available. A good plan for the transient group–on–the–move, would be to make a schedule of all the places you want to meet, and book them right from the beginning so you're not scrambling last minute to a) book the space two days before your meeting, or worse, b) try to find a new space, book it, and contact your group to notify them of the change.

It's all about location! Suggestions for possible meeting places:

- libraries (sometimes they charge, so beware)
- student common areas
- public outdoor spaces (need a rain plan!)
- someone's home (if it's ok with other inhabitants!)
- cafe/bar/restaurant (check for noise, physical accessibility, and a seating arrangement that facilitates conversation)
- places of worship (a good idea to rotate)
- community centres, board or lounge rooms of not-for-profits (opportunity for a partner organization to provide a benefit to the group)



Now you are all together: At our first YV meeting, there were 25 people – it was exhilarating, nerve-wracking, and incredibly validating to see so many passionate people in one space. Come with an agenda, but be flexible. You need to have an idea of what is going to happen, but the reality is meetings are comprised of people, who are beautifully unpredictable, spontaneous, and creative. So you never know what is going to happen – be prepared!

Setting the stage: Here are two suggestions for an introduction to start your first or every meeting. Keep a list of others.

1.) Acknowledge the traditional people of the land on which you are holding your meeting. For the true de-colonizer, learn the name of the area in its original language.

2.) Begin with the “diversity welcome”: using anti-oppressive language, explicitly welcome everyone in the group, in every way you can, to make sure everyone feels represented. At the end of your long and descriptive list, ask if there is anyone else who would like to be welcomed. You can write your own version, and there are many that already exist: one can be found here:

http://www.trainingforchange.org/diversity_welcome

Prayers: At an inter-faith meeting it is customary to begin with prayer, but not mandatory. An inter-faith prayer can be used, or ask others if they would like to offer a prayer in their own tradition. This will help you learn about your group, and help create a sense of contribution and responsibility. Ask who would like to offer the prayers at the next meeting. Keep good records of these openings to be as fair to each member and denomination as possible. As the organizer, perhaps bring in a prayer that helps set the stage for your particular meeting. Inter-faith dialogue is challenging. It requires a great deal of trust and acceptance. Ask for spiritual courage and guidance that you may all listen and hear one another with open hearts. After listening to one another at the first meeting, the YV felt that a teaching, or expression of gratitude, would start the meeting off in the right way for the entire group.

In the tradition of the Society of Friends (Quakers), holding the space for silence, hand in hand, is a good way to start your meeting off on the right foot. An excerpt or poem that really speaks to you can also be read as an alternative to a prayer from scripture.

Here are a few other options to help start your inter-faith meeting in prayer:

Draw Breathe:

*Breathe in the quiet purpose of this place;
Through outward stillness, seek a calm within.
Here we can find forgiveness and forgive;
Here feel the healing miracle begin.*

*Breathe in communion, friend with quiet friend,
Each drawing closer in this timeless hour;
As all our different needs and gifts are drawn
To the one source of comfort, love and power.*

*Breathe out the busy world, the teeming mind,
The follies, fears and failures of the week;
Breathe out contention, pettiness and pride,
And wait in trust for that of God to speak.*

*Breathe out at last, to God, the heart's full thanks
That we have seen this vision, known this grace;
Renewed through love, let us that love extend
Through all our daily life beyond this place.
Geoffrey Weeden*

Thanksgiving:

*We return thanks to our mother, the earth, which sustains us.
We return thanks to the rivers and streams, which supply us with water.
We return thanks to all herbs, which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases.
We return thanks to the moon and the stars, which have given us their light when the sun was gone.
We return thanks to the sun, that has looked upon the earth with a beneficent eye.
Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit, in Whom is embodied all goodness, and Who directs all things for the good of Her children.
Iroquois Nation*

An Islamic Prayer for Peace

In the Name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful: Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created us and made us into tribes and nations that we may know each other, not that we may despise each other.

If the enemy incline towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God, for the Lord is one that hears and knows all things.

And the servants of God Most Gracious are those who walk on the Earth in humility, and when we address them, we say, "Peace."

-- U.N. Day of Prayer for World Peace 2

Offering Prayer

All good gifts come from you, dear God, and you reveal glimpses of your grace through them. Thank you for inviting us to be partners with you in caring for your creation. We offer these gifts now, knowing that they come first from you, then from other members of your family of creation, then from us. Bless these symbols of our awareness that we depend upon you and your creation for all that we call "ours." Please accept these gifts and our desire to be your partners. In Your name, Amen.

(By Tanya Marcovna Barnett) Earth Ministry

Christian meeting opening. *Loving heavenly Father we come to you this hour asking for your blessing and help as we are gathered together. We pray for guidance in the matters at hand and ask that you would clearly show us how to conduct our work with a spirit of joy and enthusiasm. Give us the desire to find ways to excel in our work. Help us to work together and encourage each other to excellence. We ask that we would challenge each other to reach higher and farther to be the best we can be. We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

Commencement Speech: *The Earth is Hiring*

WHEN ASKED IF I AM PESSIMISTIC OR OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE, MY ANSWER IS ALWAYS THE SAME: IF YOU LOOK AT THE SCIENCE ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING ON EARTH AND AREN'T PESSIMISTIC, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THE DATA. BUT IF YOU MEET THE PEOPLE WHO ARE WORKING TO RESTORE THIS EARTH AND THE LIVES OF THE POOR, AND YOU AREN'T OPTIMISTIC, YOU HAVEN'T GOT A PULSE. WHAT I SEE EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE WILLING TO CONFRONT DESPAIR, POWER, AND INCALCULABLE ODDS IN ORDER TO RESTORE SOME SEMBLANCE OF GRACE, JUSTICE, AND BEAUTY TO THIS WORLD.

THE POET ADRIENNE RICH WROTE, "SO MUCH HAS BEEN DESTROYED I HAVE CAST MY LOT WITH THOSE WHO, AGE AFTER AGE, PERVERSELY, WITH NO EXTRAORDINARY POWER, RECONSTITUTE THE WORLD." THERE COULD BE NO BETTER DESCRIPTION. HUMANITY IS COALESCING. IT IS RECONSTITUTING THE WORLD, AND THE ACTION IS TAKING PLACE IN SCHOOLROOMS, FARMS, JUNGLES, VILLAGES, CAMPUSES, COMPANIES, REFUGEE CAMPS, DESERTS, FISHERIES, AND SLUMS.

– Paul Hawkin, University of Portland, 2009

Introductions: You do need to have one or two guiding activities to get the ball rolling and keep people from staring blankly at each other. As facilitator, Robyn introduced herself first, the partner organizations, and the premise of the group. You can ask specific questions that are fun, revealing, or related to the group ("Tell us your name, your favourite food, why you are interested in water, and one thing you hope this group will accomplish.") An icebreaker game (you can find tons of examples online) is a perfect way to get people moving. And nothing breaks down initial awkwardness like being silly together!

"YV FOSTERED A SENSE OF TOGETHERNESS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS WHO, WHILE COMING WITH VARIED PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES, SHARED A COMMON LOVE AND CONCERN FOR WATER AND MOTHER EARTH. IN ADDITION TO THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY EVOKED BY THE VERY EXISTENCE OF SUCH A MULTI-FAITH GROUP, YV PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE MEANINGFULLY WITH THE PETERBOROUGH COMMUNITY. GROUP MEMBERS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND AND/OR PARTICIPATE IN THE SACRED WATER CIRCLE GATHERING 2013 AND ORGANIZE AND ATTEND ON-CAMPUS EVENTS AT TRENT (SUCH AS TABLING FOR WORLD WATER DAY, OR EARLY EARTH WEEK)."

Structure: After introductions, one of the first things you should discuss is the development of your structure and how you will run meetings. This will help set the foundation for a successful and cooperative group. We talked about this at our first meeting. We broke up into small groups and asked people to brainstorm what the group should look like, using four guiding questions:

1. How should meetings be run?
2. How should we incorporate the spiritual?
3. What kinds of themes/issues do we want to look at?
4. What sort of action do we want to take?

These guiding questions are by no means the be-all-end-all of group development... You can think of other questions that might guide conversation around what the group will look like. YV found the four above questions were the skeleton of the “WHAT” in “What were we trying to do?” The WHY came later on as we started to explore the issues we were talking about.

In regards to the logistics of how often, where, when, and how meetings will be run, these were sorted out in the first meeting. YV developed an organizational structure in a second meeting then passed it back to the group at a third meeting to make sure everyone was ok with it. There are so many ways to run meetings: from the very formal Robert’s Rules¹, to a fluid free-for-all, the possibilities are endless. It is likely that people in your group have brilliant ideas on how to do it.

¹ Robert’s Rules of Order for Fair and Orderly Meetings provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. See references.

YV Guiding Principles

As a multi-faith group guided by principles of cooperation and respect, we will strive to always:

- Work with complete open-mindedness, suspending judgment.
- Use anti-oppressive language and practices that will contribute to creating a welcoming space where everyone feels comfortable to share.
- Listen with both hearts and minds, asking questions for clarification, not proof, and providing suggestions rather than criticism.
- Value all ideas, even ones we don't agree with, and attempt to understand where others are coming from, even if we don't necessarily wish to walk the same path.
- Be open to bringing a wide variety of spiritual practices to the group, so long as they don't put down anyone else's.
- Speak our truth thoughtfully; keeping comments to the point at hand, and being mindful of how much time we are taking up.
- Listen actively and patiently and wait until someone is finished speaking before you do.
- Take time to think before you speak, and take time-out as you need it, so that the mood remains calm and optimistic.
- Enjoy each other's company and find ways to have fun!

Group roles: Someone to steer, someone to turn, someone to navigate.... One good thing to do in the early stages, is to have people identify their skills, strengths, and areas they would like to develop. This will give everyone a better sense of what roles need to and can be filled. You have options here, too. Do you want to "elect" people to standing roles, i.e. minute taker, facilitator, etc.? Or do you want these roles to rotate?

YV decided to let planning and facilitation of meetings rotate between small groups of three people (Planning Trios), who decided amongst themselves who would fill the roles. The primary roles we identified for meetings were:

- **Facilitator**– organizer, contact person, minutes distributor.

- **Chair** –spokesperson, time keeper, responsible for keeping to the agenda.
- **Mood Minder**– in charge of mood and tone of the meeting; responsible for addressing any behaviour contrary to our Guiding Principles.

Someone in the group would be assigned the task of taking notes, and would then become one of the members of the next meeting’s Planning Trio.



Rules of the river: In a group where you are interacting with so many different perspectives and experiences, talking about issues can be difficult. Create a set of ground rules, or guiding principles, for how you will communicate with each other. Strive to work from an anti-oppressive mandate in which everyone is valued, and respected, and can speak honestly. Take a physical/emotional break, or just time out from talking when needed, and practice self and collective care. If you are a person who talks a lot, step back a bit. If you are one who tends to keep quiet, see if you can share some of your valuable insights. Don’t ever pressure anyone to speak up, but encourage everyone to listen actively -- *we have two ears and one mouth for a reason.*

Creating a written set of guiding principles, as a group, that defines how your group interacts with each other is even more important than deciding how the group will be structured or how meetings will be facilitated. This can be done by having smaller groups

brainstorming principles with one person recording the ideas and presenting these ideas to the larger group.

When YV members did this exercise there was a lot of overlap, which helped with reaching consensus, but also the differences captured the essence of what each group said. The principles were reviewed at a subsequent meeting, and chosen individuals fine tuned similar points or awkward wording, combined ideas, and reworded where needed for clarity. The final version was reviewed by the group and unanimously agreed upon!

Something else you might want to consider is how you will go about addressing any behaviour that contradicts your guiding principles. We all make mistakes, especially when dealing with sensitive topics, and it is important to have a strategy for calling someone out on oppressive or otherwise inappropriate behaviour in a way that is calm and respectful. Will you use a “Mood Minder”? Will you have a warning signal or word? Will you bring it up as a group, or talk with the person privately? As a group, you might want to decide how you will address individual lapses of etiquette, and what you will do if a person repeatedly oversteps boundaries.

Remember guiding principles are fluid and can always be added to or changed. Remember too that just because they are there doesn't mean everyone will always follow them. It helps to write the guiding principles out on large chart paper and post them at each meeting where all can see and be reminded. It is important to be direct but patient with everyone, mistakes happen so we can grow from them.

***A Note on dealing with offensive behavior:** Very few people like to embarrass other people or voice their discomforts publicly, and different cultures deal with embarrassing or offensive behavior in different ways. Some people are comfortable identifying a behavior that they do not like while others are not, and feel more comfortable keeping quiet about something that might be bothering them. It is important that someone (perhaps the Coordinator or Mood Minder) takes on the role of speaking to people one-on-one when they think that something needs to be discussed. Calling-out a person in front of the rest of the group can be embarrassing and is a sure way to lose shy members of your group. It is best if the issue is discussed with the member who you believe has been offended and the member who has offended at a time separate from the meeting and in a manner that is empathetic and positive. Often people do not ‘intend’ to offend others and can learn from a conversation that is non-confrontational and positive.*

Get out the map, we're planning our route!

In terms of how we decided to structure our group, YV developed three sub-groups that were to meet outside regular meetings to plan specific actions. These three groups were:

- 1.) **Community Engagement:** present at community events, attend public events to share information, connect with individuals and groups.
- 2.) **Media Activators:** develop resources including pamphlets, video, etc.
- 3.) **Educational Programmers:** developing/delivering workshops

The idea was that sub-groups would meet regularly to plan and organize within their chosen area. During regular two-hour meetings, YV would divide the meeting into two parts: the first hour would be devoted to conversation and connection (discussion questions, team-building or visioning activities, visits from Elders, members of faith communities, scientists or guests), and the second half saved for updates and discussion around action from the sub-groups.

The hope was that people could still provide input and participate in the various activities that the sub-groups were planning- the sub-groups were about planning and doing the leg-work, but were still accountable to and inclusive of the folks in the core group.

Sub-groups, or subcommittees, are great because they allow people to make use of their specific skills and interests and also allow for greatest time efficiency within your busy group. How you structure them, and how they are accountable to the core group, is entirely up to you!

Engaging everyone: No matter what approach you take, it is important that everyone feels like they have something to do. If folks are not organizing specific actions, they can be rotating the tasks of taking minutes, inviting guests, helping define agenda items, coming up with ice breakers or activities, choosing and delivering prayers, poems or readings, facilitating a closing, bringing treats, or choosing music, among many other things!

Uniquely us: Find ways to make your meetings warm, welcoming, fun and reflective.

Some ideas:

- Rotate DJ duties– you can use the music to make a mixed CD of your experience!
- Bring food– potluck is awesome, or people can contribute money to have one person buy snacks
- Always incorporate an opening, and closing. This could be prayer, reading, reflection, or activity, but a different person should always lead it.
- A gratitude circle is a great idea or a book where everyone writes down something they are grateful for during each meeting.
- Take pictures. You’ll want to remember, and you can use them to make a beautiful collage for your tabling events.
- Work from anti–oppressive and decolonizing principles
- Encourage respect and deep listening.
- Explore team–building activities and reflexive practices.
- Use active ideas like stand–up sessions (quick discussions held standing!) or walking meetings
- Your idea! You have tons of great ones!

"YV CREATED A COMFORTABLE AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT, CONDUCIVE TO MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE FOR FOLKS COMING FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS. IT WAS A SPACE TO DISCUSS TOUGH ISSUES, MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL, THE RELIGIOUS, AND THE ENVIRONMENT. IT ALSO PROVIDED A SPACE FOR INDIVIDUALS TO WORK AS A TEAM AND UNPACK POWERFUL TERMS AND/OR CONCEPTS, SUCH AS SPIRITUALITY."

–CAITLIN BARRATT, PARTICIPANT

YV first meeting agenda and minutes:

AGENDA:

YV First Meet-Up– Monday, Feb. 4th 2013

1. Welcome – Youth Coordinator, Robyn Smith
2. Project Explanation including Sacred Water Circle, the Inspirit Foundation & YV partners – Alix Taylor Project Coordinator & Cathy Mitchell, Project Advisor
3. Introductions – Each participant will introduce themselves and state what this inter-faith group on Sacred Water interested them.
4. Filming – Introduction of YV Video Project, Release forms and permissions – Nimkii Osawamik.
5. YV Spirituality – Youth Coordinator, Robyn Smith
6. YV Organization – Youth Coordinator, Robyn Smith
7. Water Related Issues and Actions Exercise – All participants, take time to discuss together or individually and record.
8. Gratitude and goodnight

MINUTES:

YV First Meet-Up: Monday, Feb. 4th 2013

Thanks to all who came out to our first meeting! This document is an attempt to capture what we talked about in our smaller groups.

To those who couldn't make it, this will catch you up so that you can start thinking about some of the "big picture" things, and to those who were in attendance, this will remind you of all the awesome things we discussed!

Our next (proposed) meeting time is **Sunday, March 3rd at 6pm** (potluck if you can), place to be announced.

We may also have another get-together next week if there is interest– no pressure! We will start to plan out a statement of guiding principles, so if you have suggestions and can't make it please send them on. We will send out our draft before the next official meeting so that people have time to review and suggest changes.

Looking at what everyone said, it seems like subcommittees might be beneficial in planning direct action. These might be formed around specific action we are doing or might be more general i.e. "media arts" (helping Nimkii make a movie!).

Please keep us all posted by email if you want to invite people to start planning something specific or have resources to share.

Homework:

- 1.) Think about principles you'd like to bring to the group
- 2.) Think about a subcommittee you might want to form/join
- 3.) Bring water (if you can) from a special place
- 4.) Bring a water-related object (or poem, or song, or whatever!) to share

Please note action items in italics.

Spirituality

- Start each meeting with a teaching/expression of gratitude
- Acknowledge and discuss lack of spirituality/interest among other people
- Changing your heart, making it accessible
- Including spiritually-based activities in meetings
- Practicing gratitude

Organization

- Group effort- smaller groups to organize/facilitate meetings
- Thematic meetings, focusing on a question or thought?
- Including different perspectives
- Using google docs to build up resources and share information
- Respect: in consultation, address ideas, not people** (a principle?)
- Subcommittees
- Roles:

- 1.) Mood minder (to propose breaks, read people's body language, make sure everyone is feeling ok)

2.) Facilitator– in charge of content/direction

3.) Chair– in charge of “etiquette” (ensuring people stick to principles we outline?)

Issues

–Overfishing in Scugog Lake

–Liftlocks in P’bo

–Personal and collective accountability– industry, municipality

–Water issues in Hiawatha (*Josh: presentation?*)

–What is the water status of our own community (*Alix from Green Up will bring us lots of info for next time!*)

–Who are the experts/can we have them contribute? (*Dorothy Taylor, one of the founders of the Sacred Water Circle, would like to come talk to us at our next large meeting. If you know of any scientists, or spiritual leaders from your own community, perhaps they would also like to join us?*)

Actions

–Recruitment– for group? For flash events? (*Alix has a really cool book called Guerilla Marketing specifically for action groups and not-for-profits, I will bring it!*)

–How do we make this relevant/inclusive to everyone?

–Education– making change through bringing understanding

–Go beyond preaching to the converted

–Connecting people back to the value of water

–“There is greater purpose”– reconception, visualizing, photo display?

–Tabling events, awareness

–Shoreline clean up

–Critical mass

–Signage

–Writing up pamphlet, zine, etc.

- Developing industry best practices
- Addressing green washing– real solutions, not lip service
- Developing workshop to take into elementary or high schools
- Developing subcommittees (Media, Workshop development, Tabling events, Publications)

Film night and events:

Movies and films are great ways to engage youth, attract new members, and offer great discussion starters and can help connect your group to the wider world. They are fairly easy events to organize if you find a free or cheap venue with the audio visual capacity and space that you need. We used these opportunities to recruit new members and ideas. You can promote a “pay what you can” option to help cover costs but to also remain accessible to all people.

The two films we choose to show this year:

The Water Journey <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fp-6oIT0i2A>

White Water Black Gold <http://www.whitewaterblackgold.com>

Another great resource we found was the Ecologos Water Docs: **Water Docs** is a documentary film festival about all things water. From March 21–24, 2013, showing both feature and short films about water, and held a discussion with the director or others.

<http://ecologos.ca/waterdocs/>



SECTION 4: GOING WITH THE FLOW

Keeping your group organized and engaged after the first initial meetings can be hard. Sometimes after that first buzz wears off; folks find reasons to skip out on meetings. When people get busy, sometimes they forget to come to meetings. When you're juggling a million things, reminders are helpful. Send out an email with minutes and the next meeting time shortly after each meeting, and then send a reminder a day or two before the meeting. Reminders can be posted on your social network site (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.)- making a 'group' is the best way to stay connected and allows people the freedom to share and discuss ideas.

A note on communication: Take a survey of your group and ask each person how they prefer to be contacted- while email works best for a lot of us, some people prefer other methods. A texting chain (like a phone tree!) could be a fun way to keep everyone in the loop- just make sure to have another communication method for folks without cell phones!



On the clock: Time and availability are probably the biggest hurdles to your group's success. While there is nothing we can do about changing these issues you can increase the chances of people making your cause a priority by making things fun, combining the social with the functional, choosing a time that works for as many people as possible, and making sure to meet regularly. Make things manageable and be realistic about peoples' availability- the more pressure you put on someone, the less likely they

are to come back. You could give options for commitment levels; sit only on a sub-group, or attend core group meetings, or let folks skip out on meetings altogether but attend events and volunteer? Making compromises like this allows the group to share the workload and lets people participate as they are able– for instance, if a person can't make it to meetings, they could do research, promote and do outreach, put up posters, or help with finances (if this applies). Make use of peoples' unique skills while working within the limits of their availability.

Spreading the word (or information): Want to build a successful group? Start slow, start small. Talk lots, listen more, and really get to know each other before you rush too quickly into planning any events. YV has a plan for an awesome, efficient structure– but in the short time they had together before the summer hit, spreading members too far apart into sub-groups wouldn't have been right for their community development. They discussed some awesome things they wanted to do, but what was actually done was kept simple and manageable. Movie nights, tabling around specific events or celebrations (i.e. World Water Day), random acts of guerrilla marketing² or postering campaigns – were easy ways to get people talking. For instance, one of the first activities of YV was simply to post eye-catching hand-made water-drop posters with written facts about water. If you are short on time and people, focus your energies on maintaining a strong public presence. Do attend meetings on behalf of your group to make connections and see what others are doing. Try hosting an information booth at other groups events– whatever you do get out there and get talking about your cause.

² **Guerrilla marketing** is an advertising strategy in which low-cost unconventional means (seed bombing, flash mobs) are utilized, often in a localized fashion to convey or promote a product or an idea. The concept of guerrilla marketing was invented as an unconventional system of promotions that relies on time, energy and imagination rather than a big marketing budget. Typically, guerrilla marketing campaigns are unexpected and unconventional, potentially interactive, and people are targeted in unexpected places.

If your group is passionate, eager and has time, you could spend your time developing larger projects that might initially be more time consuming, which could be used to reach a wider audience, for instance:

- Planning a huge, well-organized flash mob to draw attention to a specific issue, could be a fun way to involve the larger community.
- Developing a resource brochure or booklet that you could use to disseminate information to a larger audience could be something that might be used by other organizations as well.
- Spending some time developing and practicing a workshop that you could deliver to local schools and youth groups.

All of these projects are great ways to share information with your community, but also raise awareness about your group and perhaps recruit new members.

Don't forget that if you are still forming your foundation don't stretch yourselves too thin! You've worked hard and put a lot of effort into developing your group's structure and starting to get to know each other and it's wonderful to spend your early days planning small, well organized actions that will help you heighten your profile and grow your group. Then, when you have all sorts of eager folks on board, you can figure out which big projects will be deserving of your action and how you can organize yourselves most effectively.

You always need friends: A truly successful community group is, one that connects with other organizations to share resources and ideas. Why reinvent the wheel when someone else has already been steering with it? Not only can other organizations help you extend your network and partner on events (two organizations? Twice the publicity!) But they can also provide you with support, resources, and in some cases, funding.

This is where we start talking about allyship, a term that has several different connotations and is packed with a lot of things to consider. A partnership with another organization can be considered allyship– you are aligning yourself with that group and agreeing to support its goals and let them support yours. Allyship is also often used to describe a relationship where one person or group has more privilege than another person or group. In this description, the potential privileged ally is seeking to use their resources, time, education, or connections to assist the other group or individual. **This is a very delicate relationship, and requires a lot of thought, care, and self-questioning before embarking down this particular path!** Oppression happens on many levels and is especially common amongst well-meaning activists. Hopeful allies must recognize that they do not know “what is best” for the group they are hoping to align themselves with, and that thinking that they know what is best can be crushing to a group trying to work with strength, self-direction and dignity.

There are many examples of power-based allyships requiring great thought and care. These could include an environmental group seeking to work alongside a First Nations community fighting against resource extraction, or your multifaith group looking to work with a faith-based group facing



discrimination. These are both honourable causes with noble intents! However, it is important to approach these scenarios with humility, respect, and an awareness of your privilege and position. Privilege is not an inherently bad thing– in fact, it might be of use to the group you want to work with, and they might ask you to use this ‘power’ on their behalf. It is essential that you ask that community how they wish you to help– don’t go barging in there with a plan, let them lead you. Furthermore, it is totally conceivable that the group might not even want your help! In that case, keep learning, sign petitions, and show up at open demonstrations. Sometimes allies are just “butts in seats” providing strength in numbers, and that’s okay too! Keep trying, but don’t try too hard: if a certain group really doesn’t want you around, accept that and align yourself with causes that will appreciate and make use of your unique passion and skills!

Media– Keeping everyone happy and safe: As you film, take pictures, record talks to capture some of the great work you are doing, be sure to take the necessary precautions not to use photos of people without their consent! Have photo consent forms if any children are at your events. For all others youth and adults alike announce that photos, videos will be taken and that you intend to use them to share on social media, promotions, on the website and to funders. Let them know that if they want to opt out to let the volunteer photographers know. Remember to do this at every gathering, event and meeting where you will be taking photos.

Build the Capacity of your group! Skill–building is one of the benefits of working in a community action group, and is something that benefits not only the individual but also the group! Remember our set of “Role Play” questions from earlier? These are great to give people a starting point as to where they could be useful, and sometimes people just want to stay in their comfort zone. However, the great thing about getting comfortably involved with such a group is the opportunity to learn and grow, developing skills alongside a supportive network of people. Challenge yourself and encourage others to expand their skill–set as well!

Engaging in skill building workshops like anti-oppression, consensus building, and facilitation are all great ways for your group to become closer and for individuals to learn new things. It is best to receive training from people outside the group who are themselves trained in this kind of work. Consider the unique skills your group-mates have, and think about what kinds of workshops you could facilitate amongst yourselves. A particularly tech-savvy person could run a media outreach and computer skills workshop, while a contact dance instructor could lead your group in a team-building activity. A business grad could give a crash course in finance and organizational budget, while someone who works in a not-for-profit might mentor another groupmate in grant-writing.

The possibilities are endless, and you might even find yourselves with enough workshop ideas to organize a “Free School” event where you could invite the public to learn alongside you! A good place to start is to think about what kinds of skills you need to develop to make your group successful, and use your wide web of contacts to find the people who can share these with you!

When looking outside your group to get skills training start with educational institutions, environmental and conservation organizations, local re-skilling groups such as Transition Towns, YMCA’s and faith group leaders to find the experts in your community who are also interested in youth engagement and interfaith dialogue. Ask your network who would make a good trainer, who they would like to learn from or what skills they are interested in learning. Make sure to do your background research and to meet with your guest ahead of time to assess and go over the guiding principles of the group and all the details of the session.

Check-ins: keep testing the water! Ongoing check-ins with your crew will ensure that everyone is happy and that things are running smoothly. You could do this orally, or you can use “Stop/Start/Continue” cards– these can be anonymous and are a great way to gauge ideas people want to initiate, elements of the group they think are already working well, and anything that they feel needs to change within the group. It is important to do this regularly– so any issues that you have to deal with don’t fester and appear later in an inappropriate place or time.

Stop Start Continue Cards: Group Check-in

Please complete all 3 parts. Place completed forms in the box located in the center of the circle.

I would like to see YV.....

Start: *(What would add value? What new approach/activity would improve the group?)*

Stop: *(what’s not of value/not working/not of value?)*

Continue: *(What works well/ provides value/do you like best?)*

Like any adventure– it is important to remember it is the journey not the destination that is important, holding safe space is essential for inter-faith dialogue. Each member will need attention and nurturing, as an organizer it is up to you to ensure no one is neglected and that concerns are addressed in a timely manner.

SECTION 5: LOG JAMS, RAPIDS AND SWIFT CURRENTS

When you have to send out so many emails to spread your cause wide, often there is at least one person who will question what you are doing. While the overwhelming majority of communication will likely be positive, there can be one or two sour apples that make you wonder why you're doing this. Responses like, "I tried this last year, don't even bother." "Why would I want to work with *those* people?" Or a lack of response altogether can be disheartening. Focus on the good, and consider whether you want to explore those responses further.

For instance, one pastor involved with environmentalism in his Church, said he respected YV's cause, but he and other Elders at his church were concerned that the spiritual nature of the group was too far removed from their own. With a friendly tone, the coordinator responded with:

"Thanks for the prompt response, definitely understand your reticence to participate in a project that does not align with your spiritual beliefs. Just wanted to clarify, that the YV project is funded by the Inspirit Foundation and as such is very much a multi-faith group of young people. We have Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Mohawk and Anishinaabe people currently on the panel and are certainly not guided by any one spiritual tradition, just a shared love for the environment and commitment to working together to respect each other's differences and commonalities, learn from each other and make a difference.

The whole idea is a cooperative movement of peace, which is exactly what the Sacred Water Circle focuses on as well. While the Circle was formed by Indigenous women and their allies, the principles of love, stewardship, respect and inclusion are, we think, universal to all faiths.

Thank you for your reply though and if you do reconsider please let me know and I would be happy to share some discussion! Keep well." Robyn Smith.

The pastor in question still declined to have her come and speak, but she did receive a more candid response that went into greater detail. It turned out the concern was related to simple time constraints, rather than fear of other faiths, that was keeping him from connecting with YV. After the email exchange, it was felt like the group and the pastor understood each other a little better, even if he wasn't jumping right on board.

Community perceptions: Sometimes, no matter how hard you try to present yourself well, you realize you're never going to please everyone. When you approach controversial issues, you have to expect that someone, somewhere, will have a problem with your groups actions or methods. It is best to have a strategy prepared for how you will deal with this. If you are not comfortable explaining your actions then chances are you probably shouldn't be doing it. For instance, when YV first started recruiting participants they were confronted by an aggressive Facebook message from a well-known community member criticizing the project. There was a perception that non-Indigenous people were trying to lead an Indigenous movement – this was not the intent. The group's goal was to incorporate people from many faiths, rather than focusing on Indigenous allyship. It is important to think about where the comment is coming from in order to judge how much of your time should be spent addressing it. Is the commentary coming in a way that is reactionary, rude, inaccurate or exaggerated? Are they calling you names or insulting the group itself rather than the specific issue? Try de-escalating the situation with a simple, "we're sorry you feel that way. If you have specific suggestions or critiques we'd be happy to hear them!" If the person is a stakeholder, ally, or respected member of the community, who is making a thoughtful observation or has well-articulated concerns or doubts, it is likely worth investigating the concern. Sometimes (often!) we need to examine our motives and actions. Do acknowledge that if you're wrong, it's ok to make mistakes. Apologize and move on!

In the YV case, Robyn responded politely to that email– since it was made in a public forum rather than a private message she felt compelled to respond publicly. The person who made the comment is a respected academic and activist. She agreed with her comment that Indigenous people must lead such a movement. She informed the person

of the project's intent, and of her intent to let others take a leadership role. Then she asked this person to share any resources they might have, and an understanding was reached.

Keeping the peace: Group dynamics are another area where things can (and likely will, at some point) get stressful. Group training in non-violent communication or conflict resolution will help sort out hurt feelings and how to move forward. It helps to remember the goal of the project when caught up in someone's anger or stubbornness– including your own! Take time to listen– if you are formulating your own argument before the person has stopped talking, you aren't really listening. In fact, try to think of it not as an argument– the point is not for you to win, but for everyone to win. Try not to debate every point the other person makes, nor defend each of your statements– no one is 100% right nor are they 100% wrong, and finding that place of compromise will help you move on. Depending on how much you care about maintaining a relationship with a complainant, an outside voice like a neutral acquaintance might be useful in escalated arguments.

Another helpful technique is to remember the difference between intent and action– while your feelings may get hurt, it is very unlikely that hurting your feelings was anyone's intent. Keep this in mind, and when in doubt ask the person what was their intent, and what they are trying to accomplish, beyond winning the argument. There are good odds their intent won't be too different from yours.

Some strategies to cool down: If conflict does arise, it doesn't take long for things to get heated! Try taking a break, venting to an outside acquaintance, waiting until you are calm, and making sure to talk to the person if you think it is important enough. Weigh your options: sometimes you can just take a deep breath, apologize and shake it off, but if you feel like this conflict is a longer-term issue affecting your relationship with that person or group dynamics, things do need to be addressed. When addressing an

issue, be sure that you've considered your role in it too- a problem is not usually fully one sided and it is possible that you are contributing to it as well.

Speak in a calm voice, use "I feel" statements, and be honest about your feelings as well as your own role in the conflict. Explain what you hope to get from the conversation and ask what the other person would like- try to figure out the root of the problem, what went wrong in that moment or series of moments, and how you can move forward with a solution that works for both of you. Try to identify specific ways that you will prevent a future conflict, and be glad that you've managed to talk it out and get on with the good work!

The bottom line is you won't always get along with everyone. The tricky thing about working in a diverse group, is that inevitably there will be conflicting perspectives. This is a good opportunity to challenge your perceptions, practice your mediation and compromise skills, and maybe even change your mind in the process!

SECTION 7: OBTAINING SUPPORTING FUNDS

It was our hope to have as many youth attend the Sacred Water Circle Gathering in 2013. The Sacred Water circle Committee supported the YV team in their strategy to finance attendance fees to ensure their involvement.

Many groups in the community want to help make a pluralistic Canada and engage youth in environmental science and awareness. The Youth Coordinator created a youth subsidy program that allowed for municipalities, student associations, community clubs and post secondary institutions to fund registration, travel and accommodation cost for youth.

Some of our lessons include:

- Give yourself lots of time to get supports and sponsors on board.
- Keep really good records of letters sent, phone conversations, follow-up and accounting.
- Emphasize the opportunity for the donor to be recognized for their contribution on your promotional materials, at the event and on your website and social media. You cannot express enough gratitude.
- Be sure to ask for receipts from youth participants and prepare them in advance to be reimbursed for their expenses.

On the following pages we have provided sample appeal letters and our youth subsidy form.



www.sacredwatercircle.ca

March 27, 2013

Re: Request for Funding, Sacred Water Circle Conference, May 8-10th, 2013

Dear Trent Central Student Association,

The Sacred Water Circle is inspired by Indigenous teachings from around the world that call upon all of us to restore our sacred relationship with water. To respond to this call, in 2012, Dorothy Taylor, of Curve Lake First Nation, brought together community members of all ages and backgrounds to form the Sacred Water Circle (SWC). The SWC has since extended outreach to schools, communities, municipalities and businesses, and held a successful conference, to help those who make decisions that affect the water of the Kawarthas region, and beyond, have a better understanding of our fundamental relationship to water.

As an organization with an interest in water issues, youth engagement and education we are seeking your support in order to enable the participation of Trent students in our **upcoming conference taking place from May 8th-10th, 2013 at Trent University, with events at Petroglyphs Park and Hiawatha First Nation. The theme of this year's conference is "Youth Voices"** and the event is intended to bring youth and elders together to discuss how to address the many pressures on water in our region, and beyond. As such, **we are seeking a contribution of \$1000 to support the participation of youth delegates to the conference.** Our hope is to have little or no fee for youth participants and for them to have the opportunity to speak to, and learn from, elders about water. We hope to offset their costs through contributions, such as yours.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Cathy Mitchell Huels

Coordinator, Sacred Water Circle

**2013 Sacred Water Circle Gathering
Application for Youth Subsidy**

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

Do you qualify as a Youth (under 30)? Y or N

What financial support do you require to attend the Gathering (check all that apply):

- Full Gathering Fee (includes 3 day event, lunch Wednesday and Thursday)- \$75.00**
- Transportation- please indicate:**
 - mode of transportation _____
 - Where will you be coming from? _____
 - Amount \$ _____ (mileage is .40 per km)
- Wednesday Dinner (at Trent)**
- Thursday Dinner (at Trent)**
- Accommodations (how many nights?) 1 2 3**

Briefly explain why you want to attend this year's Gathering:

Briefly describe what you can contribute to the Gathering (volunteering, insight etc.):

Briefly describe how you will share what you learn with your community (please note: this can be simple- and must be doable):



Dear Trent Central Student Association,

Your generous **contribution of \$1000 supported the participation of 10 youth delegates to attend the Sacred Water Circle Gathering in May 2013** and for each of them to have the opportunity to speak to, and learn from, elders about water.

The Sacred Water Circle is inspired by Indigenous teachings from around the world that call upon all of us to restore our sacred relationship with water. To respond to this call, in 2012, Dorothy Taylor, of Curve Lake First Nation, brought together community members of all ages and backgrounds to form the Sacred Water Circle (SWC). The SWC has since extended outreach to schools, communities, municipalities and businesses, and has now held 2 successful conferences in 2012 and 2013, to help those who make decisions that affect the water of the Kawartha region, and beyond, have a better understanding of our fundamental relationship to water.

TCSA's contribution enabled the participation of Trent students in **the Sacred Water Circle Gathering May 8th-10th, 2013 at Trent University, with events at Petroglyphs Park and Hiawatha First Nation. The theme of the conference was "Youth Voices"** and the event brought youth and elders together to discuss how to address the many pressures on water in our region, and beyond. This unique conference also saw the coming together of western science and traditional ways of knowing; it merged industry with institution, economy with innovation, and the practical with the spiritual respect for water. This gathering also gave the students a sense of guidance and mentorship from intergenerational relationships. Feedback from the youth participants was extremely positive. We could not be more pleased with the results of the 2013 Gathering, and learned as much from the youth delegates and we aimed to teach. The students who participated affirmed that the 2013 Sacred Water Circle Conference was a valuable experience. Thank you for helping to make attendance possible for students.

"I cannot say enough good things about Youth Voices and feel so fortunate that I was able to participate in such a dynamic group! Youth Voices provided the opportunity to engage meaningfully with the Peterborough community. Group members had the opportunity to attend and participate in the Sacred Water Circle Gathering 2013" Caitlin Barratt, participant.

We greatly appreciate your support, with our warmest gratitude, Miigwech.

Sincerely,

Cathy Mitchell Huels

Administrative Coordinator, Sacred Water Circle

SECTION 8: THE LAST LEG OF THE TRIP

“Wait,” you say, “we just got going”. True but this is a youth outreach manual, once you have a good basis for the group, there is no end to the number of trips you can take together.

Sylvia Plain was the Youth Guest Speaker at the Sacred Water Circle Gathering in 2013; in her address to the participants she emphasized traditional knowledge and culture that mentors youth far beyond 18 years. She mentioned the honor of spending time, and learning from Josephine Mandamin the Grandmother of the Mother Earth Water Walk. This was a walk for water in prayer and peaceful protest around the Great Lakes and across the country from each of the four directions. Her story of connection to family and community, and wisdom of Elders seven generations before her, helped to crystallize the understanding that our youth and young adults need mentorship in this time of great change. All people are overwhelmed by environmental challenges of today, all faiths are challenged by interfaith dialogue; together our diversity makes us strong and resilient. With this lesson we began to create a platform for YV and help mentor the next generation by creating the space to learn from our community and by spending time together.

Mentorship is a personal development relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialogue, and challenge.

Learning from our elders: One of the most striking aspects of the Sacred Water Circle/YV project was the intergenerational dialogue that arose. “I’m not sure if we’d anticipated this,” said Youth Coordinator Robyn Smith, “but what started out as a really beautiful thing to incorporate into our gatherings, turned into a focal point of our meetings, discussions, and the Sacred Water Gathering itself.”

Members of faith organizations, local First Nations communities, and members of the Sacred Water Circle joined YV at six meetings to share their perspective on issues like spirituality and activism, deep ecology, water teachings, and building strength and relationships, and to guide discussion around these topics. These guests' visits were the highlights of the meetings, and after guests left, they would take time to reflect and found more questions had been raised.

- Dorothy Taylor, Founder of the Sacred Water Circle – women's role within the environment, especially as we relate to water.
- Cheryl Lyon, Transition Town Peterborough – deep ecology, science and spirituality connections.
- Youth Pastor Christian Harvey, St. John's Anglican Church – environment and privilege, Christianity's association with colonialism and environmental degradation and reclaiming connections with the Earth through a relationship to spirituality.
- Heather Brooks Hill, Sacred Water Circle Political Consultant– intergenerational connections, how spirituality and activism are interconnected and how our approach to these changes with age and how youth can influence policies and governments toward change.
- Elder Shirley Williams, Trent University Indigenous Studies – offered a water blessing and profound wisdom on our sacred relationship with water.
- Sharyn Inward LEED AP, Green Communities Canada – value of clean, abundant water and how to protect it via conservation, pollution prevention, and restoring natural hydrological cycles in cities.

Members learned they are stronger united, and that multiple perspectives gave them a wider, richer perspective, and greater ability to enact change. As young people, they learned so much from their Elders– and from what they said, the Elders learned from the group! Smith says, they were reminded of how little contact generations have these days: the older people in our lives have so much wisdom and lived experience to share. Younger folks have the energy, technological knowledge, and widespread connections to help enact their teachings. This was a theme echoed throughout the Sacred Water Gathering, and at the end one member of the Sacred Water Circle expressed her gratitude

for the close connections she'd felt with younger people over the week. The Sacred Water Circle member spoke about how touched she was by this opportunity to listen and be listened to by young people, and asked us all to take hands to sing the Gchi Nibi (Sacred Water) song in honour of our responsibility to water and to each other.

Another member of the Sacred Water Circle felt passionately about the role of mentorship and intergenerational connections within spirituality, environmentalism, and activism:

“YV BROUGHT A VERY PROFOUND DIMENSION TO THE SACRED WATER CIRCLE THIS YEAR. OUR WORK IN ISOLATION IS IMPOVERISHED BUT, WITH PARTICIPATION OF SO MANY WILLING ELDERS AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE – IN PARTICULAR THE ENERGY AND COMMITMENT OF THE YV GROUP, THE SACRED WATER CIRCLE GATHERING 2013 WAS A STELLAR EXAMPLE OF CONCERNED CITIZENS OF ALL AGES WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

–HEATHER BROOKS–HILL, SACRED WATER CIRCLE

Celebration time: One way to keep group dynamics strong, mark the changing seasons or the end of a school year, and reward yourselves for a job well done, is a party! While it's great to socialize throughout your group development, it's especially important to celebrate at a time when people might be leaving, when a specific project or big event has finished, or if your group is choosing to move on to other things. Choosing a place that is outside, physically and financially accessible, and open to people coming and going is a great way to get folks together to enjoy each other's company outside of your usual environment. Perhaps you might like to keep it closed to do a formal debrief, or perhaps you might like to invite friends and family so that you might all get to know each other a little better.

Finally, it never hurts to take a break– often summer, or after a project or event has finished, is a great time to slow down a bit. However even a few weeks is really important to give people a chance to rejuvenate and come back clear-headed. Or, perhaps they will

choose to move on to other projects, and be replaced by equally awesome people– that’s ok too.

While there are certainly stumbling blocks to any project, and issues to be worked out within any group, do not see these as reasons to give up but as opportunities for growth. No effort, even one that doesn’t work out quite as you’d hoped, is ever a failure– you’ve always learned something and gained valuable experience and skills. Members of your group wish you well and the best of luck in the next leg of your journey and enjoy all the new friends you’ll meet and the skills you’ll develop!

Some examples of how to celebrate achievements of the group as a whole is to spend some reflection time together, put together a slide show of the groups photos, or have a appreciation circle. Group appreciation circles can take a while so give the exercise the time and space to be fair to each participant. Each member had a turn as the focus of the group; all other members have a chance to say one thing they appreciate about them. The results are rejuvenating, and often it empowers people to know they are valued. As a volunteer or non–profit group we held a vegetarian potluck party – a highly recommended way to celebrate as a group and learn each other culture and love of food.

A pitfall to watch out for when celebrating individual achievements, do not celebrate years of volunteering as your milestone, someone can be a volunteer for 10 years but only do a few hours a year, while someone else in a span of a few months could do more work for an organization then the other person did in 10 years. It is better to be specific about individual contributions when celebrating, create your own milestones of contribution.

Speaking of milestones, it is wise, as with any project, to set up mile markers as part of project planning so you know when you've achieved something, like the number of members involved, or awareness events reaching a number of participants, likes on your facebook page. You want to celebrate your achievements not only internally but by spreading the message externally as well.

Celebrate your partners and supporter contributions, always send a thank–you letter that details what was achieved with their funding or contribution during the project be sure to

get each person's permission to use photos on social media or in print form to help celebrate your group and share achievements.

To create a lasting record of what was accomplished through posting to your group's facebook page, putting photos in an online album or Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) that can be shared with multiple members, consider storing records on more than one computer and on an external hard drive so information isn't lost once individuals move on from the project.

Some thoughts shared by one YV member to finish things off:

"I CANNOT SAY ENOUGH GOOD THINGS ABOUT YV AND FEEL SO FORTUNATE THAT I WAS ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A DYNAMIC GROUP! IN OUR FIRST YEAR, I FEEL LIKE WE CAME SO FAR IN TERMS OF IDENTIFYING THE MANDATE AND GOALS OF OUR GROUP AS WELL AS BRAINSTORMING FUTURE DIRECT ACTION PLANS. FROM HERE, I BELIEVE THE GROUP WILL ONLY GET STRONGER AND WILL BE DOING REALLY SOME COOL STUFF IN THE PETERBOROUGH COMMUNITY NEXT YEAR!"

-CAITLIN BARRATT, PARTICIPANT

This Hopi Nation Prayer was brought to us by one of our most dedicated SWC members, Anne Trudell, Society of Friends (Quaker). It has been used over and over during our project to help give our group a message of hope and spiritual courage in this time here and now where the future is calling us to greatness.

There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly. Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water. And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate. At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally. Least of all, ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

We are the ones we've been waiting for.

Oraibi, Arizona – Hopi Nation

TERMS USED IN THIS MANUAL

The following descriptions are how the YV came to think of as the definition of these terms.

Spiritual Pluralism: A way of working together with people of all religious or spiritual backgrounds. Pluralists may follow one spiritual path or several, with the understanding that there is not one single spiritual truth and that all faiths can work together and find commonalities while celebrating differences.

Guerilla Activism: Cheap, every-day outreach focused around a specific issue. It's often loud, obvious, and in an easily accessed public space. You don't want to make people come see what you're doing- usually, the point is that they can't really avoid seeing it. For instance, YV offered passer-by's a glass of free water on World Water Day, and asked them to think good thoughts for the water, calling out "Happy World Water Day!" to those going by.

Inter-faith Dialogue: Coming together respectfully (often under a set of principles, or agreed-upon guidelines) from a variety of spiritual backgrounds to engage in conversation and community.

Consensus: A way of decision making in which the whole group agrees- this involves a lot of time, listening, and compromise. The idea is not to persuade everyone to all think the same, or agree on one of two (or more) solutions, but to come to some sort of compromise where everyone feels they have been heard and that they are okay with the decision. Often a consensus-based decision looks includes a aspects of options A and B (and C, D, etc.)

Community: A group of people who connect, work together, and enjoy each others company. They often work toward a common goal, or from certain principles, or share a common perspective. They don't always get along perfectly, but they agree to work to sort things out for the good of the group.

Guiding Principles: The way we agree to work together. These can also be defined as “rules”– things we will and won’t do in our group meetings. The idea is to use our guiding principles to find out what is important to everyone, and to work together.

Core Group: In YV, this is the larger group that would meet to hear reports from the smaller (sub) groups. This is the group that developed larger principles and in which our themed discussions were based.

Sub-Group: Groups focused on specific areas, or themes. Task-oriented and focused on goals, more planning specific action rather than talking about ideas.

Non-Violent Communication (NVC): a form of communication often used in conflict prevention and management. People who practice NVC have a great deal of self-awareness, empathy for others, and a desire to communicate honestly and without blame or judgment of others. NVC asks people to identify their needs and the needs of others to discover how everyone’s needs can be met.

Privilege: the state of being born under favourable conditions that allow one to move more freely in the world. For instance, class, race, sexual orientation, and ability, are all factors that can influence one’s privilege.

Oppression: the state of being under one (or usually more) condition(s) that takes away one’s power. Can be enforced individually (one to one), societal (by larger groups), or systemically (through power structures i.e. government, business).

Anti-Oppression: an intentional way of working together, in which all people are valued and everyone’s experiences are taken into consideration. The hope is to restore peoples’ power, not by ignoring oppression but by naming and challenging it.

Colonialism: Canada, along with many nations in the world, committed heavy injustices when settlers arrived on this land. (See resources). Those injustices continue to occur, and economic structures are built on exploitation of lands not respectfully shared with but taken from the First People who lived here. This exploitation model is often called colonialism.

Decolonization: is the long process of becoming aware of the negative aspects of history, and committing to work against that colonial mindset to remember that we all must work together. It is the process of recognizing Indigenous people as knowledge holders and supporting the revitalization of their lands, languages, and cultures.

Allyship: Sometimes used to describe a relationship between two organizations or individuals. However, it is more commonly used when the ally is a member of the “dominant” group who questions and works against discrimination to help achieve a common cause.

RESOURCES

An Educator's Guide for Changing the World: Methods, Models and Materials for Anti-Oppression and Social Justice Workshops. Ann Curry- Stevens. Centre for Social Justice.

<http://www.socialjustice.org/uploads/pubs/EducatorsGuideforChangingtheWorld.pdf>

Faith & the Common Good (FCG) is a network of people from different faiths and cultures who call Canada home and believe in working towards the common good and relate regional inter-faith/inter-cultural concerns into public policy processes. www.greeningsacredspaces.net

Interfaith Dialogue Association The work of the IDA takes place within our local religious communities, schools, the media, dialogue groups, interfaith services, and conferences.

<http://www.interfaithdialogueassociation.org/index.htm>

North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) builds communication and mutual understanding among inter-faith organizations and diverse religious groups throughout North America. Without infringing on the effort of existing organizations, NAIN facilitates the networking possibilities of these organizations and encourages cooperative interaction based on serving the needs and promoting the aspirations of all member groups. <http://nain.org/>

Roberts Rules of Order - Revised, by General Henry M. Robert 1915 Version,

<http://www.robertsrules.org/> or <http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/about/docs/Roberts-Rules-Cheat-Sheet.pdf>

Scarboro Missions are in touch with local, national and international interfaith activity and networks, and with Catholic inter-faith activity around the globe.

https://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/what_we_do.php

The African Water Page. <http://www.africanwater.org/religion.htm>

Training for Change. An excellent resource for activists who wish to participate in nonviolent action.

<http://www.trainingforchange.org/>

The Catalyst Centre: a zine for social change. A source of education tools, facilitation techniques, design and collective action. http://www.web.net/~story/RC/not_just_a_bag_o_tricks-v-7.pdf

Eco Leadership: The Power of the Circle. David Aubrey Berger. Living University Press 2009.