

The Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion

FINAL REPORT

Including Diversity: Process and Progress



**Submitted by:
Sandy Berman
Circa Enterprises**

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| 1. Organizational Context | 1 |
| 2. Implementation Process | 2 |
| 2.1 Diversity Training Session I - March 20, 2007..... | 2 |
| 2.2 Diversity Training Session II – April 10, 2007..... | 3 |
| 2.3 Diversity Training Session III – June 13, 2007 | 4 |
| 2.4 Diversity Training Session IV– October 16, 2007..... | 6 |
| 3. Action Steps for the Future | 7 |

The Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion

Including Diversity: Process and Progress

The report charts BACI's progress towards the inclusion of diversity in the organization. The report examines the organizational context for this initiative, the implementation process and action steps for the future.

1. Organizational Context

Setting the stage for expanding the commitment to diversity



Notions of diversity are not foreign to the Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion. Since its origins in 1956, when twelve Burnaby families gathered to provide programs for their children who were left out of public programs, BACI has its roots in including citizens whose participation was otherwise overlooked. The 2006 accessibility report identified the policy of BACI to “ensure that the Association is inclusive and accessible to all persons who use and interact, or who may potentially use and interact with our

services.” Report authors Gerry Juzenas and Chris Tanner noted that “systems and resources are useless if people cannot find, access, or understand them.” An accessibility checklist is used at least annually at BACI to review each service offered to identify potential cultural, attitudinal, architectural, environmental or financial barriers. These authors noted that many of the barriers that were identified in the Accessibility Report 2004-2005 have been rectified and that BACI has an active Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) committee that addresses issues on a monthly basis from the various programs. BACI initiated this process to examine other obstacles to full participation that have not yet been identified.

To mark its 50th year, BACI embarked on a 5 year Strategic Plan and stated that:

Goal # 11: A joint Staff/Board Committee on Diversity is Established

BACI planned to create a Diversity/Accessibility Committee and hired Sandy Berman (through a POD grant) as a diversity consultant to develop its mandate and initiatives. The organization identified the following outcomes it hoped to achieve in this process:

- An effective Diversity/Advocacy Committee established
- The key goals of the committee are identified and the direct link to BACI strategic plan and the City of Burnaby is made
- Various organizational processes and initiatives developed through the Committee

- BACI becomes involved in more community-based collaborations
- BACI produces an Accessibility Review resource for outside groups/organizations
- More positive changes occur in relation to accessibility - both internally and in the broader community.

2. Implementation Process

The Process: Diversity Team Training



Four facilitated group processes took place on March 20th, April 10th, June 13th, and October 16, 2007. The attendance varied for each session and included members of staff, management, volunteers, a Board member and an individual served by BACI. The training sessions are described as follows:

2.1 Diversity Training Session I - March 20, 2007

The facilitator introduced the concepts of primary and secondary levels of diversity to define organizational diversity. Organizational change takes place in increments and these steps were presented so that participants gained an understanding of the process BACI will be implementing. The role of Diversity teams as facilitators of this process was explored and the organizational factors that support this change process were identified. Lastly, possible action steps to implement greater diversity in the organization were investigated. Participants left with a handout of the four elements of the MASI model, an illustration of the Diversity Wheel, a list of seven elements of successful change teams, the role of a diversity team, and a list of definitions of critical terms.

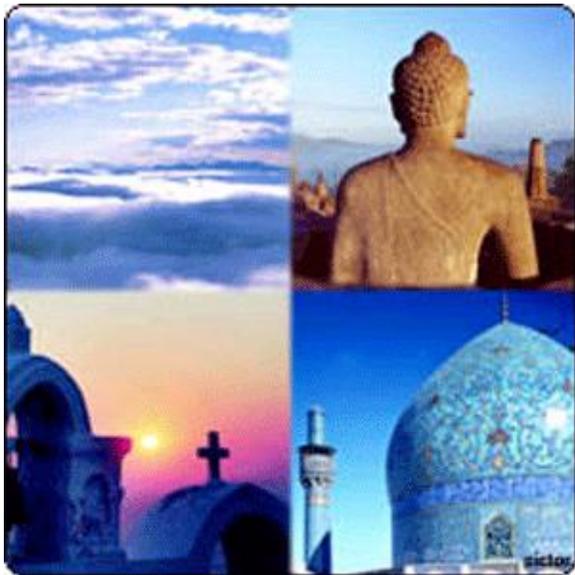
Participants were asked to identify what it means for BACI to be an inclusive organization. The following points were recorded:

- All individuals are accepted and valued members of the community and this is reflected in the actions of the organization.
- The organization welcomes and honours all people, values and recognizes people's contribution if they do not share our values.
- All people are different and the organization celebrates people's unique abilities and contribution in a demonstrated way.

From this first session, the participants decided to also solicit input from staff, Board members, volunteers, clients and families about what an inclusive BACI means to them. This question was put to the BACI community via email and the BACI newsletter. Other actions that were identified for consideration included:

- Reaching out, bringing people together both externally and internally similar to community development.
- Building connections, connecting with groups in the community. Identify the connections staff/board/volunteers already have in the community in order to strengthen connections in the community.
- Linking to what BACI is doing externally and internally e.g. Advocacy, Measuring Up, Accessibility plan etc.
- Link with grass roots organizations such as the Food Bank.
- Explore how BACI can help clients maintain their cultural identity.
- Explore barriers to inclusion of different cultural groups e.g. do a social audit.

2.2 Diversity Training Session II – April 10, 2007



A background and overview of the Diversity Initiative was presented and the previous session reviewed. The main focus of this training was to explore how BACI can inspire diversity and inclusion throughout the organization and the greater community. Dialogue among participants generated the following ideas:

- Set an example such as hiring people with developmental disabilities.
- Engage people more in discussions to develop an understanding of diversity. This can be done through supervisory meetings and discussions at various levels of the organization. The goal is to get people to do something to explore diversity and how they define themselves.
- Get people to share their cultural roots, what's important about their culture and what cultural events they celebrate.
- Look at successes in the organization and look at what works and expand on that.
- Use the newsletter to tell people's stories.
- Have brochures in different languages.
- Tie diversity into the dialogue about citizenship.
- Link diversity to the accessibility plan.

- Address “other words,” stereotypes and comments that exclude people or groups.
- Draw attention to what individuals can do to make a difference with small actions. For example come up with a list of Tips or ask a different question such as “What small thing can you do to make BACI more inclusive?”
- Send out an email everyday that addresses diversity.
- Do more training about diversity in the organization.

A list of BACI programs and activities were generated that, while they addressed some aspects of diversity, could be further expanded. During this session participants generated an Action Plan that clearly outlined the person taking the lead on each initiative and set times frames to accomplish each goal. This overarching goal of this plan was to build understanding in the organization of what diversity means. To do so, the following actions were identified and projected to be completed during the summer 2007:

1. Design and adapt the Diversity Circle to include:
 - plain language
 - pictures
 - other languages
 - auditory options
 - tactile options
2. Design a discussion format.
3. Pilot diversity discussion at the May 3rd training.
4. Facilitate diversity discussion at the May Supervisors meeting and support supervisors to facilitate the diversity discussion with their own teams.
5. Facilitate discussion at the May managers meeting.
6. Facilitate diversity discussion at the Seniors Tea meeting on May 27th.
7. Facilitate diversity discussion at the June Board meeting.



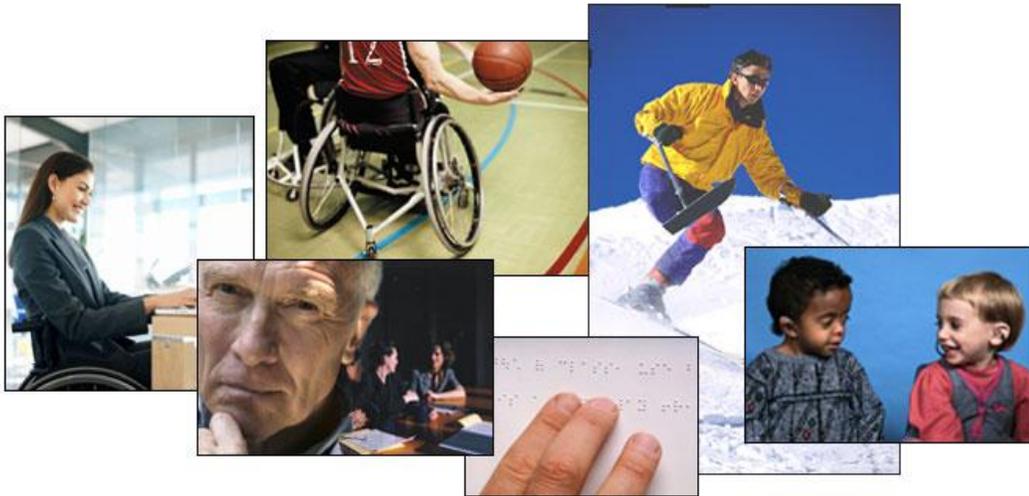
2.3 Diversity Training Session III – June 13, 2007

A lot of discussions around diversity issues have emerged in the organization as a result of this process. These discussions have facilitated new connections among people and have broadened the planning for upcoming BACI activities.

Numerous diversity-oriented activities were listed. These included:

1. Incorporating culturally diverse activities into the upcoming barbeque

2. Orientation for new employees currently includes a 2 hour session on Cross-Cultural Communication and Awareness
3. Discussions of diversity have been prompted at various levels of the organization using a large, laminated Diversity Wheel that has been translated into nine languages. These conversations were facilitated with:
 - Individuals that BACI supports
 - Board members
 - Seniors at the Seniors' Tea



New Ideas were generated:

1. Explore the PHILIA dialogue model as a way to expand the issues of diversity
2. Expand the Cross-Cultural Communication and Awareness Orientation of new employees to include broader issues of diversity
3. Integrate diversity into the Quality Assurance indicators
4. Develop an anonymous story-telling space on the Intranet as a chat room or forum to invite sharing of positive and negative experiences
5. Explore the re-writing of the mission and vision statements of BACI to include diversity
6. Develop a diversity policy

Challenges were also identified:

1. There is a need to “unpack” ability to encourage a deeper level of discussion.
2. There is increasing awareness that attending to diversity means acknowledging that the different learning styles, strengths, experiences and values that people bring impacts the workplace. The development of the leadership guide for new coordinators/managers included a lot of discussion regarding the skills that managers and coordinators need to learn how to deal effectively with conflict that may result from these differences.
3. Incorporating notions of diversity into the planning process for each person BACI supports was discussed and issues regarding maintaining their safety and confidentiality arose. This issue, the session participants agreed needs further exploration.

2.4 Diversity Training Session IV–



October 16, 2007

Participants indicated that momentum around diversity issues was building in BACI. This was evidenced by the growing number of activities that were reviewed at this session. Highlights are outlined below:

Ongoing activities:

1. The development of a policy on diversity was explored by seeking the opinion of Jason Li at the North Shore Multicultural Society. It was decided that this was not a useful direction to go in at this time. Instead the participants decided that BACI would find better and stronger ways to reflect and embed diversity in the practices of the organization.
2. The “Celebrating our Diversity” barbeque was a great success
3. Discussions with the facilitator of the Cross-Cultural training workshop indicated that the session does incorporate more aspects of diversity than just ethno-cultural differences and does explore systemic discrimination. The facilitator has agreed to include the Diversity Wheel in the training.
4. The Daycare Centre literacy program is using ethno-cultural literature.
5. The Accessibility survey now includes questions related to diversity.
6. Information about disability and community living is being presented in various ethno-cultural communities: e.g.:
 - Sessions at Metrotown took place for the Chinese community and a spring session is planned for the South Asian community
 - The Family Resource Centre is supported by MOSAIC
 - The brochure for the Infant Development Program is now in the three languages identified by the City of Burnaby to be the highest language groups.
 - ASL classes were successful and will be run again
7. BACI has hired more people with disabilities.
8. When contracting out for services BACI now looks for companies that operate in a socially responsive manner.

Challenges:

1. Outreach to families who are financially compromised and socially marginalized is limited and needs exploration.
2. The use of plain language for BACI policies requires attention to improve communication with all staff.
3. Awareness is growing of the need to explore diversity more broadly e.g.: low income, age etc.

3. Action Steps for the Future

Continuing the Work

BACI has made significant progress in broadening its concept of diversity at various levels of the organization. Discussions, and actions to support these discussions, have taken place with Board members, management, staff, families, as well as people who are supported by BACI. At present there is growing awareness of the need to put systems in place to address the inevitable conflicts that arise when difference is welcomed in an organization.

Making room for diverse opinion, values and ways of doing things is not easy. The benefits that emerge on personal, professional and organizational levels, however, are enormous as they lead to substantive growth, creativity and resilience.

A Diversity Training Session was held on March 13th to discuss the next steps in the process. The following action steps were identified:

Internal Action Steps

- Hold a training session with both family members and staff with regard to bullying. Anti-bullying emphasizes values of inclusion and respect and are therefore closely linked to the diversity initiative.
- Build links with the Pink Campaign to emphasize the connection between the goals of the campaign and diversity.
- Support BACI's goal of being the best employer by exploring new ways to do hiring, interviewing and staff reviews.
- Explore new ways to do growth plans and living documents.
- Include the term "diversity" in the eight values that form part of the Quality Assurance indicators in order to make the commitment to diversity more explicit.
- When reviewing BACI's Mission and Vision include ways to weave diversity into the language of the Mission and Vision.
- Review the Life Sharing Network Manual to include diversity principles.
- Explore strategies to link diversity to continuing efforts "to keep BACI as a warm and welcoming place." This can include reviewing the pictures on the wall and who contributes the art work.

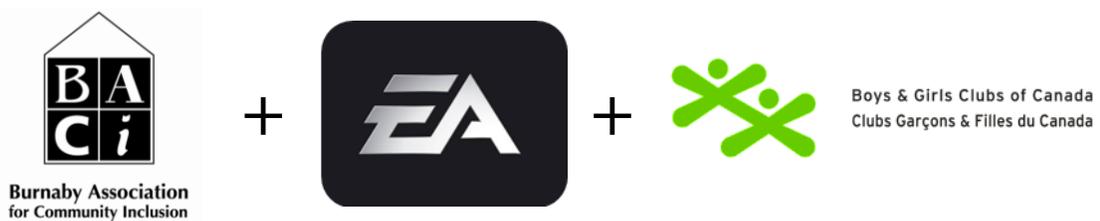


- Expand the scope of work of the Staff Training Wellness Committee to include diversity celebrations such as Chinese New Year, International Women’s Day, Diwali, or Eradication of Poverty Day.
- Submit the Diversity Report with the Accessibility Plan.

External Action Steps



- Explore strategies to promote BACI’s expertise in the area of diversity in addition to community living. This can include marketing BACI as a trainer/consultant to employers or offering a half day workshop on Diversity followed by a dialogue in the afternoon based on the World Café or the PHILIA model. The goal will be to focus on shared common interests as the thread to bring people together.



- Initiate partnerships with other community and business organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, Electronic Arts, the Board of Trade to open a dialogue about diversity and build relationships around initiatives such as bullying.
- Hold Diversity workshops internally and integrate diversity into other workplace training.
- Do a needs assessment to get input from the community regarding what their needs are, and what BACI can do to fill these needs. Suggestions were made to initiate the needs assessment at a meeting of the Burnaby Inter-Agency Council and by contacting Burnaby Parks and Recreation.



- Extend the partnership with MOSAIC to promote BACI’s services to the South Asian community.

Denis Bell has agreed to Co-Chair the Diversity Initiative with Tanya Sather.