

LISTEN TO THE DRUM

Justice and Peace City representatives at St. John Bosco meeting room May 9, 2009.

Purpose to begin developing and to understand a tolerance for the Aboriginal community in this city.

Plan: I Rather than have Aboriginals speak about their culture and the ways, we had a brief introduction by someone with strong connections with that community.

It was fortunate that the Parish Life Director for the parish, Sister Estelle Lavigne had spent many years on various reserves. Here are some of her significant comments:

- They had never been allowed to be self-sufficient.
- Living on the reserve was a form of enslavement.
- Treaty rights and amount of land was restrictive.
- Their own spirituality - Manitou
- We owe them a lot.
- “We’ll come when we are ready.”

Plan II A series of five provocative statements, each with five follow up questions was prepared. One of the five statements was given to small groups of two or three with time to discuss and then make a summary report to the larger group. Each group then reported to the gathering with the opportunity for all to make additional comments.

Encounter 1 “I’m afraid to go on Twentieth Street”

- Commonplace among east side people, particularly older single people.
- Reasons: Reports of drugs, prostitution, alcohol, violence.

There are Twentieth Streets all over North America.
No go areas. It is the place for latest group of immigrants.

Specific recommendations for change

1. more businesses for unoccupied stores and space.
2. refurbish present stores that have businesses open.
3. move or limit pawnshops.
4. encourage owners, landlords and tenants to make changes.
5. role of Riversdale Business district?
6. City has zoning plan for reduced taxes for the area.
7. Where is the Chinese gateway at Idylwyld promised years ago?
8. Encourage stores to post (and endorse) no drugs, no alcohol policy.
9. Encourage banks and credit union to serve everybody (eliminate money marts.)
10. Support Station 20 West project.
11. Support organizations like Community Clinic in their search for finances to extend.
12. Become informed about the work of CUMFI re housing and mothers

Additional note

- Broadway has many of the same problems, but it and they are a little more hidden.
 - It is part of a temperance colony; it has no liquor store.
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Encounter 2 “Most aboriginals I know or hear about, don’t seem able to do a day’s work like many of us.

- This is likely to be heard anywhere. In many societies, people regardless of race or colour would like to work for only a few days each week. People have “earned days off”. If possible they like to have full weekend of leisure activities.

1. Need for better public transportation system.
2. Having more immigrants and refugees, in whom there is a better work ethic will help as an example.
3. Hire two or three aboriginals at a time
4. Explore who is doing what to train people, example Casino, trade, business and government groups.
5. Sask Builders Association is one group. Build up list of good stories.
6. Need for support: adequate child care, good housing,
7. Understand that family problems and no housing are factors.
8. Despite the comment about good work ethic of new immigrants and refugees, it is the latest arrivals, i.e. aboriginals from outside the city are usually looked down upon.
9. Affirmative action and quotas should only be temporary.
10. Sometimes a culture has values not accepted, example absenteeism.

Additional Note: Schools, notably Catholic, are addressing this in their programs, example FAST (Families and Schools Together) and community Schools.

Encounter 3 Why should I say I am sorry for what someone or some organization or some government said and did years ago?

- It is much better to know and to understand what you are sorry for. It is a problem when this happened many years ago, when neither you nor your family were present or part of the system. But then who forgives, a leader today, especially in a democracy where there may be objections from a minority.

1. Need for a huge change in attitude and a better understanding of a process.
2. In the case of the residential schools settlement, who can apologize? Is it the Pope, the Vatican, the Bishops of Canada?
3. What is the connection between an apology and financial compensation
4. We have similar problems in our life and society,
5. In sports how are punishments administered, in the rules and in the game. What happens when the players reoffend in the game and the next?

6. There's more to playing a game besides winning. Problem of professional sports. Sportsmanship?
7. In politics, people rarely witness apologies in forums.
8. In public, political leaders are slowly making apologies, but often only after they have gained an advantage.
9. In the corporate model, people, both staff and customers don't count. There may be remorse in the courtroom.
10. Money is a factor. People ready to sue; lawyers ready to act. "I want money."

If we follow the model of Returning to the Spirit, a three stage approach of telling the story and the interchange between the two groups, we will see that forgiveness (healing) comes with learning to listen, to empathize.

Encounter 4 "I don't understand all this about sweetgrass, sweat lodge and nature stuff as well as round dance and drum songs. What has all this to do with living in the city in the twenty first century?"

1. We have our own practices associated with our culture. Easter, Ukraine. Music and dance are part of these from old to today, reggae etc
2. School systems take account in their curricula.
3. Elders and others are invited or are employed in the schools.
4. Comparisons are possible between Christian and traditional values.
5. Need for care in language We not they.
6. People in schools, business must learn not to differentiate.

We are all people of God.

Encounter 5 Something's wrong with the way they live. Just look at how the prisons have so many aboriginals in them. Look how many girls and women end up on the street. And then disappear or are murdered. I wouldn't want any of these kinds of people living near me.

This is not by choice. We are learning the facts of their life and ours.

1. Again teachers, we as parents and their elders can help.
2. Sports events can be a great way of bringing people together.
3. Compassionate and positive parents in their society and ours.
4. What are we and what can we do about johns.
5. Media feeds racism.
6. Law enforcement has to be different. HELP scheme for helping prostitutes.
7. Corporate crime is far more extensive and far more hurtful, but is not reported.
8. The effect of residential schools and its adverse effects on parenting, together with the forced taking of the children has to be known.
9. Children were hidden or sent on the trap lines.

10. No self respect and this will not be replaced until they earn a decent living – a generation away.

Economics is a basic factor – and education. Need to subsidize food and rents so that drugs and alcohol are not the alternative to a lifestyle of poverty.