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**Immigrant Services**  
*Shuswap*

## Shuswap Community Conversations

### Conversation 1: "The Power of One"

October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014

**The Power of One to Make a Difference:** Recognition of our individual ability to make a difference is an essential precursor to our willingness to work within a community of others to effect change. This recognition is confirmed through our acknowledgement of others and our appreciation that we are each endowed with special gifts. The decision to share our gifts remains solely within the power of the individual. The nature of our individual gifts helps us determine our choices as to where, and in which way, our individual gifts can best be deployed to serve the community of others.

**Choosing To Make A Difference:** There are choices that only the individual is capable of making. The ability of any group of individuals to work together in order to bring about change or to sustain an initiative is dependent on the individual commitments of each of its members to assist in doing so. Only the individual has the power to choose to work in conjunction with others. Each individual has a finite limit of resources they are able to commit in their lifetime. It is for the individual alone to decide whether to divide their resources amongst assisting a number of initiatives or whether to commit those same resources assisting a select few initiatives. The decision depends on whether one would prefer to make a substantial difference improving one aspect of their community; or, to make a more modest difference on a number of fronts. The individual may also, should one be so inclined, choose to remain idle refusing to commit to assisting any social enterprise or to use any of their gifts and talents.

**Committing To Make A Difference:** Commitment can be measured as the extent to which an individual is prepared to go, in order to assist in bringing about change or maintaining progress without expectation of personal return or benefit. The power of any one individual is, in large, the product of the resources the individual is prepared to commit to a cause and the duration for which the individual is willing to continue his or her commitment.

**Inspiring Others To Make A Difference:** The power of the individual is multiplied by the individual's ability to inspire others to choose to commit themselves to a common cause or purpose. Personal heroes are individuals that are able to inspire others to follow their example. One's ability to inspire others can come from a number of sources. The affection one person has for another, as in a parent-child relationship, can inspire the child to emulate the parent. An individual may also be motivated to take up a cause by the reasoning and argument put forth by another respected individual, as in the case of a teacher or pastor. Many individuals are inspired to act in accordance with the example set by a chosen mentor. An individual may or may not be aware of being inspired or of inspiring others.

**The Exponential Power of One:** Whereas everyone has the power to make a difference in the world, when two individuals come together to promote a cause, the effect is more than doubled. When a number of individuals come together the potential of the group is more than the sum total of the individual potential of the assembly of individuals. When individuals interact there is a synergy created that enables each individual to perform beyond that which they are capable of achieving alone. (This concept is referred to, in academic literature, as “scaffolding” or as the “zone of proximal development.”) Most everyone has experienced how, while listening to another person, an idea comes to mind that they would never have independently formulated.

**Conversation and the Power of One:** Conversation is the means by which we weave the gift of our oneness into the social fabric of our community. It is by means of respectful conversation that both our need for individual empowerment and social inclusion are met. It is in the process of meeting this same individual need in others that a community is formed and fortified. This process, whereby we come to recognize our unique oneness of person and our common need for social acceptance and inclusion, serves to build more welcoming communities and to enhance our capacity, as a community, to embrace diversity.

**Summary:** Believing in one’s ability to make a difference is an essential precursor to social engagement. Before entering into a collaborative enterprise with others, one must first feel they have something to provide (a gift) that will be valued by other participants. The power of one individual is enhanced when exercised in a community of other individuals. While each individual enhances their power to make a difference when choosing to work within a community of others. The decision to do so is a choice that resides exclusively within the power of the individual. While witnessing the contribution made by one’s mentors or heroes can serve to inspire one to follow their example, the decisions of where, how much and for how long one wishes to commit is, also, within the sole power of the individual to decide. While the individual may decide to work alone, the greatest return on the deployment of their resources comes when one works in conjunction with a community of others. This negotiation between individual and social needs and between disengagement and commitment is exercised through conversation.

**Bernie Desrosiers**

**Facilitator of Shuswap Community Conversation #1**

*And now you hold out your hand and you beckon to me to come across the street. But how can I come? I am naked and ashamed. How can I come in dignity? I have no treasures, I have no gifts. What is there in my culture that you value? My poor treasures you can only scorn. Am I then to come as a beggar and receive all from your omnipotent hand?*

*No! Somehow I must wait. I must delay. I must find myself, I must find my treasure. Then I can say to my wife and to my family, "Listen: they are calling me; they need me. I must come." Then I can walk across the street and I will hold my head high for I can meet you as an equal. I will not scorn you for your demon gifts and you will not receive me in pity. Pity I can do without. My manhood I cannot do without.*

From a presentation made by Chief Dan George at Western Washington State College on May 5, 1971.