

ENCHANTMENT FOR INCLUSION

by Judith A. Snow

Recently my friends invited me to be part of the teaching team at their brand new workshop, Creative Facilitation. We were supporting 24 people who were exploring their own abilities and techniques for helping others to discover their giftedness. Our common interest was and is to create a world where everyone is seen to be gifted and where no one is excluded from participation. This inclusive culture is to be established by ending prejudice, isolation and lack of practical support.

As the four days of learning and practice drew near to closing, one word kept coming up - enchantment. I have heard this word before in reference to our work or similar work done by others. But I heard it as a sort of romantic or cutely ideal expression. This time it caught my breath and my imagination. What are people saying when they say they are enchanted? What is the nature of enchantment? These are my thoughts on the matter.

The nature of our work, my many friends and I, is first of all to imagine

the world of inclusion. This world is NOT REAL! It is a DREAM - an ancient dream to be sure, but nevertheless a dream. It is simply a human dream of the world where equality is not an issue because difference is not an issue. It speaks of a world where difference and diversity are radically resourceful; where everything that is done or built is created out of the gift of opportunity that diversity provides. It is the world where exclusion is essentially unthinkable because to exclude anyone would be to rob the community of its most precious resource - the opportunity that that person's difference makes possible.

So our first task is to imagine this world of inclusion - to take ownership and responsibility for the dream. Inclusion is my dream, it is our dream, but not ours alone because it is a human dream, perhaps the essential human dream.

But dream is not real. We clearly do not live in the world of inclusion. We hope for inclusion. Hope is good;

it is more nurturing than despair. For millennia many people have hoped for the world of inclusion. But hope will not distill a dream out of the realm of possibility and build it in the realm of reality. As the Maori say, "Wishing never filled a game bag". Some other power or action is required, more effective than hope. I believe that what is required is the power of enchantment.

The nature of the power of enchantment is that it unlocks the prison of what we already know. What moves us is that we see something happen that we 'know' is not possible. We 'know' that rabbits don't hop out of empty top hats. We 'know' that a model ship under full sail cannot get into an empty whiskey bottle. Yet when we see the impossible has been made possible we are released into a reality ourselves.

When we are enchanted the doorway to reality is opened to possibility and what was only fantasy becomes achievable - if not by us personally right now, at least potentially by someone at sometime in the foreseeable future. A shift takes place in our hearts and minds. We can contemplate what needs to be done next. We can decide whether to be counted in or out.

Knowing that a rabbit can be made to come out of a hat or that a ship can be placed in a bottle will not change a person or the world very much. But some enchantments are far from merely entertaining. Under some enchantments people working together do things they 'know' they don't know how to do.

Recently I was taken on a tour of a small printing company owned co-operatively and operated profitably by a small group of people with big dreams and ideas to communicate. My guide glowingly described the process of raising money and going to another country to purchase obsolete printing equipment, and then, video taping themselves dismantling it in order to use the tape to reassemble the giant piece of machinery in Toronto.



He told of each teaching the other the ins and outs of running the equipment and managing the business. He explained how each had learned to do all the jobs so that every stage of their work could always run at optimal efficiency. He told the story with courage and pride; their story of turning their own marginalization into a profitable, viable business in less than one year. They had become enchanted and their dreams of communicating their ideas became a reality through their hard work even though at no time were they sure they 'knew' what to do next.

The work of enchantment is not hazardous. The doorway between reality and possibility has its own laws; it must be opened adeptly or nothing of substance is achieved. Each dream has its own consistent truths and reality has its inflexible structures and limitations. For a dream to become real the enchantment must match both the dream and the reality of the dreamer.

Our work of building an inclusive world requires we who enchant to develop the skills required to bring the world about. Otherwise the dream will remain a dream. Even worse, if our efforts are too clumsy the dream of inclusion will revert to seeming like unachievable fantasy and people will lose even their hope. So the work of my friends and I, of all builders of inclusion, is not only to dream but also to discover the powerful mixture of inspiration, knowledge, encouragement and action that will open the doorway between our dream and reality. We must become adept at the enchantment of a new culture. Fortunately we have some experience with a mix that works. These are some aspects of enchantment for inclusion that provide a powerful pathway.

Having the dream oneself is fundamental. If the dream of inclusion is clear and strong for the one who is embarking on creating the enchantment it serves as a guide to further knowledge and action. Strengthen

the dream by exploring and speaking about it often.

The first opening of the door to reality comes with articulating the dream. Many people dream of a world of equality - but it is when they hear the words that put flesh on the dream that they discover that it is their own dream. Often their experience is as if they are encountering their dream for the first time. Very simple words are often the most powerful, giving the listeners concrete images to hang their five senses on. If listeners can imagine the colours and flavours of inclusion, see themselves moving and doing in this new world, the dream wakes up in their own hearts, perhaps for the first time. This is the beginning of the courage necessary for action.

Stories are powerful vehicles of conveying these images. Especially powerful are the stories of people who have experienced exclusion and who are striving to build inclusion. Pictures and sketches are also powerful conveyers of images, giving people the means for moving beyond linear, captivated thought into a mental world where concrete images have flexibility.

Often people have never dreamed together - only privately, or perhaps with a close friend. They don't know that people can share a dream. Such a discovery is essential if they are to build a new reality. Our enchantment includes building welcoming places where dreaming and story telling are encouraged, guided and interpreted in the language of inclusion. Such common spaces are usually short term, perhaps lasting for an evening in someone's home or a week at an inclusion workshop. Every effort is necessary to make sure that these spaces for listening, speaking and dreaming are always made available.

Deeply connected to speaking and listening the dream of inclusion is another aspect of our enchantment building relationships. The relation-

ships that we have inherited or built in the exclusion world do not have the power necessary to create reality from dreams. Sustained only by factors such as jobs, tradition or proximity, traditional relationships often take no account of the unique abilities or passions of people. These connections are easily severed.

First and foremost we must create relationships that welcome people who are excluded right now. Not all who are now excluded will want to be welcomed into a new circle of participation. The best way to find out who wants to come out of exclusion and who doesn't is to offer the opportunity, often many times. Those who do dream of inclusion must be welcomed in such a way that honours their own way of being and their own choices about what to do in the world. In other words deep and repeated listening will reveal this person's pathway to finding a valued role in the world. Guided by the gifted participation of this included dreamer such circles of support often create great surprises as people transform together and create new opportunities together.

Other relationships must be created and recreated as well. The ongoing building of a new culture requires a variety of working partnerships. The dream of inclusion has abundant room for individual giftedness but no place for individualism. Our gifts are meant to create opportunities for each other. As creators of the enchantment of inclusion we must take every opportunity to work in creative teams. Also we must make it part of our work to support people in creating and sustaining working teams of their own.

In inclusion both dreaming and diversity are fundamental to sustaining such partnerships. The world as it is now can obscure an enchantment for inclusion and weaken creative partnership. People require opportunities to discover their diversities and deepen their dreaming in order to build and sustain these new relationships. Once again the establishment of

common spaces is necessary. Here people are guided in articulating the dream of inclusion and in rebuilding their supportive relationships. People must gather in large or small numbers, to speak and listen to their dreams again and again, to name their relationships and their work, to fortify their courage and to discover their shared courses of action.

Enchantment for inclusion, is enriched by and infinite variety of strategies and an inexhaustible depth of information and knowledge. These resources can only be measured and defined by those who will use them. We must respond to our own gifts and the opportunities and obstacles encountered by our partners and by the people with whom we are working to enchant. As our work dictates we can make use of history, our own

stories and the stories of others, books of research and techniques, the wealth that comes from close observation and reflection, friends who can teach us to draw, speak, etc., and much more.

Suffice to say, that the road to wisdom has no end and no one has travelled too far on it. It is essential only to remember that the tools must truly reflect the dream of inclusion or the door between reality and dream will not remain open, but instead, be locked shut to us.

And what do the enchanters of inclusion have to look forward to? The ancient Torah tells of how Moses stood on a high mountain and looked out to the Promised Land. He, however, never set foot in this land himself. In my own time Martin

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Luther King dreamt of a mountain and looked out on a world of equality. But he was killed before the work bore its fruit. Will inclusion be achieved soon? Let us create together a powerful enchantment. Let inclusion be in my lifetime.....

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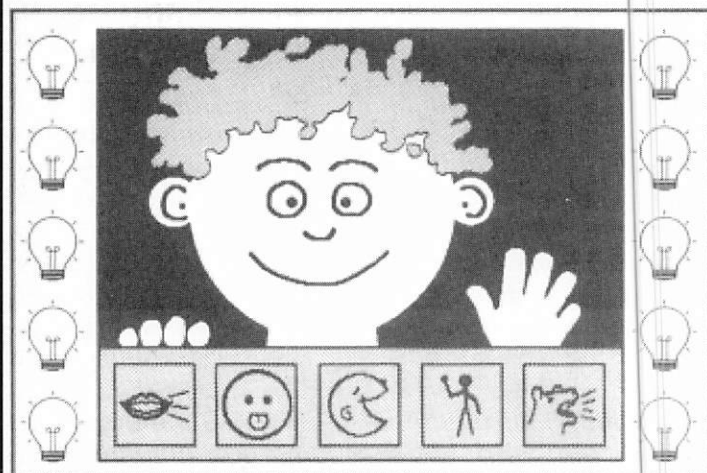
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