

SUMMARY REPORT

**THE WORLD WE WANT:
A COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ON
CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING & CONTRIBUTION**

November 28th & 29th, 2003 Edmonton, Alberta

A Part of the Planned Lifetime Advocacy Networks Philia Dialogue on Citizenship



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The World We Want: A Community Dialogue on Citizenship, Belonging and Contribution

With Mark Kingwell, Robert Stollery, Karen Houle, Roy Skoreyko, Myrna Kostash, Doug Stollery, Maggie Hodgson, Bruce Uditsky, Denis Bell, Kathie Bell, Bruce Morito, Cheryl Crocker, Mark Cabaj, David Kahane, and Ron Lajeunesse (moderator).

November 28th and 29th, 2003
Grant MacEwan Community College
Edmonton, Alberta

This dialogue began with a Friday evening lecture by Mark Kingwell followed by commentaries from Robert Stollery, Karen Houle, and Roy Skoreyko, and lively discussion involving all conference participants. On Saturday morning, the conversation continued with another lecture by Mark Kingwell, and commentaries from Myrna Kostash, Doug Stollery, Maggie Hodgson, and Bruce Uditsky. Following these speakers, conference participants were invited to participate in a World Café – Café Parlez – organized by Mark Cabaj and David Kahane in which they would have the opportunity to discuss issues and ponder questions in small groups. From late morning to mid-afternoon, all participants engaged in dialogue on issues of citizenship, exclusion, contribution, and their visions for a more just and compassionate society. This was followed by summaries of the small-group discussions by Denis Bell, Kathie Bell, and Bruce Morito, and final thoughts on this weekend's events by Cheryl Crocker.

Mark Kingwell's Friday Evening Lecture

Dr. Kingwell, an award-winning political and cultural theorist and author, and professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, prefaced his remarks by expressing that he is often deeply affected by the things he hears at the Philia dialogues. He also credits Philia and PLAN with teaching him that “dialogue is about listening more than it is about speaking”.

An Encounter With The Other

He begins his lecture with a story that he hopes will bring to the fore ideas that will be a background to the thoughts that we will explore this weekend about the nature of citizenship. A few summers ago, Dr. Kingwell was woken at 4 a.m. by a burglar in his apartment. The burglar, realizing he was there, turned and ran out the front door. Dr. Kingwell caught up with his burglar, and describes his encounter with ‘the other’ as they met face to face. Ultimately, Dr. Kingwell ended up simply swearing at his burglar and walking back to his apartment. He pointed out that, “When you are there on the sidewalk and it's just you and the other, you don't have society. You have, in fact, a miniature return to a pre-social state where you could invoke force until society reasserts itself... That's all you've got. There is no persuasion available there”.

Dr. Kingwell suggests that this example brings to our attention the following issues about the structure of society. First, we are the ones who create and establish relationships of inside and outside, private and public and we do this everyday. The lines that demarcate these boundaries are always negotiated by us and, in theory, they are always available for renegotiation. Second, the story reminds us that there is a complex relationship between force and persuasion. Philosophers have tended to suggest legitimacy can only be secured through reason and argument, and not through force. Dr. Kingwell, however, asks us to remember that argument, too, has its limitations and is often insufficient to make legitimacy active.

Relationship Between Citizenship and Belonging

Citizenship, belonging and contribution are the key words of the dialogue this weekend, and it is important to be clear on their meaning, and how these concepts are related. Dr. Kingwell understands the distinction between citizenship and belonging as follows: “Belonging has many sources and many roots and it is a much more demanding and rich concept, I think, than perhaps we should understand citizenship to be. Nevertheless, citizenship has been, politically, a lever to belonging. A way, a structure, if you like, of a particular kind of belonging. Specifically, a political kind that exercises our imaginations”.

Different Ideas of Citizenship

Dr. Kingwell points out that, in the West, we have typically used four models of citizenship: models based on bloodline, belief, law, and participation. More specifically:

- (1) The first model is based on the idea that citizenship is determined by shared bloodline, where your fellow citizens are also your clan.
- (2) The second model is based on shared religious or ideological beliefs, where the requirements for citizenship are simply holding the same comprehensive doctrine.
- (3) The third model of citizenship is one based on law, and citizenship is bestowed on those who fall under a particular legal code. In this model, we don't have to have to share beliefs about politics or the good life with others in order to be considered citizens. This model, Dr. Kingwell argues, has secured many goods but we are also beginning to see its limitations.

Dr. Kingwell says that, “while I'm not entirely confident that we can make a smooth transition to a better model, I think it is necessary for us to try to move beyond the idea of each of us as sovereign individuals loosely bound together, often as a result of the advantageous fact of birthplace or of cleaving to a certain legal system, and rather move into a notion of citizenship that is much more philosophically wide-ranging, inclusive, sensitive, and challenging to the complacency of each one of us”. What might this new model be?

- (4) Dr. Kingwell proposes that a model of citizenship based on participation may be a more tenable model. This model rejects the underlying premise of the legal model of citizenship that we are isolated individuals, and instead assumes that we are social beings that exist in relation to one another, and must encounter one another.

These encounters with the other, for Dr. Kingwell, are at the center of political life.

Deconstruction of “The World We Want”

Dr. Kingwell moves from discussing models of citizenship to meditating upon the nature of the phrase ‘The World We Want’ which is the title of this weekend’s dialogue.

(1) “The World”. Dr. Kingwell says that, in a sense, there is not just one world, but that we all live in multiple worlds that interlock and overlap. However, when he says ‘the world’ he means the “horizon of concern”, or the “sphere in which things matter”. He also points out that in a factual sense there is a single natural environment that we all share, that we have inherited, and that we will pass on to future others.

(2) “We”. Dr. Kingwell points out that ‘we’ is a relational concept. He says that, “To use the word ‘we’ is to ask that someone listen, not to assume that they have. To argue with the hopes of not necessarily persuading always but of having someone respond. ‘We’ is a dialogic achievement”. Dr. Kingwell is careful to point out that ‘we’ can be divisive and that it can, and has been, used in ways that are exclusive. He asks, instead, that we recognize the *relational* element inherent in ‘we’.

(3) “Want”: Want, when understood correctly, is not reducible to utopian desire or mere whim. Dr. Kingwell understands ‘want’ as “That sense that all of us have that the way things are is maybe not all that they could be; that there is more work to do always; that there is a ‘not yet’ that functions in all political life; that we have not yet done enough; that we have not yet been inclusive enough; that we have not yet achieved enough justice or enough love”.

Relationship Between Theory and Practice

Dr. Kingwell closes his talk with a discussion of the relationship between theory and practice. He asks us to understand the relationship between these two activities as dynamic. Practice informs theory and, in turn, theory “helps to clarify what is at stake in practices, the norms that practices are generating, and in that clarification refines the force of those claims so that it bends and improves the practice from which they came”. This dialogical process, according to Dr. Kingwell, is endless.

Commentaries

Dr. Robert Stollery, Edmonton businessman, and philanthropist, is the first to comment on Dr. Kingwell’s lecture. He begins by offering the following quote from Dr. Kingwell writings: “Citizenship is a way of making concrete the ethical commitments of care and respect, of realizing in action an obligation to aid fellow travelers”. Dr. Stollery is particularly interested in the idea of *inaction*, and many of his comments buttress Dr. Kingwell’s remarks on the relationship between theory and practice. Dr. Stollery understands that research into social problems is essential, but also expressed the concern that research is often used as a substitute for real, transformative action. Describing this attitude as the “let’s study the problem further mentality”, Dr. Stollery cited several examples of this consequences of this kind of thinking in Alberta, such as the fate of full-

day kindergarten, and the Success by Six program. These are but a few instances in which the call for further research was used as an excuse by the Alberta government to avoid taking concrete action that would improve the well-being of Canada's children.

Dr. Karen Houle, assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Alberta, explored the nature of contribution and what it means to contribute. She argues that “how we think about our economy, and how we structure our activities as economies, shapes what we think a contribution is, what kinds of activities count as contributions, and most importantly who a contributor is or might be”. The economy that dominates our social and civic relations is the money economy, and under this economy a good citizen is someone who *has something* to give to someone else. This economy is troubling for questions of contribution, Dr. Houle argues, because those who have little or nothing are not seen as contributors. Further, interactions in the money economy don't require actual persons, and we ought to be suspicious about a system that doesn't oblige us to be with or care about others. Instead of understanding citizenship as ‘having something’ she proposed that we define citizenship as ‘doing something’ or ‘being something’.

Dr. Houle closed her comments by proposing we begin to participate in alternate economies, which expand our understanding of what a contribution is and who a contributor might be. She outlines four alternate economies – barter and exchange, gleaning, potlatch, and gift economies – and described gleaning in more detail. Gleaning, said Dr. Houle, is “Making use of what otherwise appears to be waste or useless”. Who is a contributor in a gleaning society? It is someone who is patient, creative and inventive, someone who is good at making use of what is wasted. Dr. Houle concludes by pointing out that by redefining our notion of what a contributor is we understand what counts as citizenship in a fresh way.

Roy Skoreyko, the third commentator, is a member of the disabled community and sits on the board of Edmonton's *Persons with Development Disabilities*. His comments focused on the notion that we need to build strong bridges between disabled and non-disabled communities, so that the disabled community can have an opportunity to more deeply participate in the larger society. Mr. Skoreyko asks that we understand the disabled as persons first, and secondly as persons with disabilities – an implicit request to focus on what the disabled and non-disabled communities have in common, rather than how they differ. Further, he asked that instead of an antagonistic relationship with our politicians, we cultivate cooperative relationships where we work together within the political system to create a more just world for those with disabilities.

Post-Commentary Dialogue

Following Dr. Kingwell's lecture and the three commentaries, conference participants were asked to briefly discuss the following two questions with the people at their table: *What did you hear from Mark or the panelists this evening that you found most interesting? What did you find the most puzzling?* After participants had a chance to discuss these questions amongst themselves, Dr. Kingwell, and the three commentators joined the conference participants in a lively dialogue.

Alternate Economies

A woman asked Dr. Houle to discuss in more detail each of the alternate economies that she mentioned. Dr. Houle explained that a barter-exchange economy is a useful, worthwhile trade between individuals that doesn't usually involve money. This economy is "tailored to needs and surpluses" in that "what you are very good at and what you have a lot of, is put in relation to what I have a lot of or am very good at". Thus, a contribution under this system is offering whatever is needed or wanted, which opens up our notion of contribution. Dr. Houle also described the potlatch economy, which existed among aboriginal groups on the west coast. It was "an economy in which there was a highly structured social system, limited amount of goods, and the highest position was held by the one who held the most stuff. The aim in potlatch was to give it all away, and you get in exchange for getting rid of all your goods higher status".

A couple of questions were raised about Dr. Houle's understanding of potlatch. A member of the Frog clan, within the potlatch system, suggested that Dr. Houle's interpretation of potlatch was too individualistic. Dr. Houle replied that the main point she wanted to draw out was that in this alternate economy, the role of the *receiver* is as important as the role of the giver, and this opens up our notion of what contribution is and who a contributor might be.

The Relationship Between Citizenship and Belonging

A question was put to Mark Kingwell to say more about the relationship between citizenship and belonging. He gave the following response:

"I think it is the case that, I hope not in mine, but in other people's writing on citizenship, that citizenship and belonging are co-extensive concepts, that they are the same thing, in fact. I know that there is some language in my book where I talk about how citizenship is a lever to belonging, but it is true that every extant notion of citizenship has had an exclusive dimension. That is, there is always a group or groups that don't belong if we understand citizenship as belonging. And even the most formalist and legal notions of citizenship still exclude."

Second, he said that, "belonging is a deeper and richer notion than, I think, even the most activist notions of citizenship can be. Belonging speaks, in some instances, to our deepest, most intimate human relations, and those are the relations that we both can't, and shouldn't, model politically. The 'can't' I think is probably obvious, the 'shouldn't' maybe is more controversial. What I mean by that is that the kinds of giving and receiving that we get in our intimate human relationships are not sustainable at the political level. And they demand things that we shouldn't demand of our fellow citizens because if we do it means that we're asking them to live their lives differently from how they may wish to".

A woman, raising the example of domestic violence, asked Dr. Kingwell if he is suggesting that intimate relationships are not and should not be political. Dr. Kingwell clarified that he's not saying that relationships of an intimate kind don't have a political

dimension. What he is saying is that political relationships just don't have that quality of intimacy, which give close relationships their character.

Citizenship and Rights

One man commented that Dr. Kingwell's burglar story brought out the idea of rights and how rights are fragile. Rights, he stated, are not God given, and thus can be taken away at any time. Part of citizenship, he argued, is the constant struggle to achieve and protect human rights for everyone. Dr. Kingwell agreed, saying that the encounter with his burglar did throw into sharp relief the "tenuous, highly constructed, and fragile" structure of rights.

Roy Skoreyko added to this thread of the discussion by reiterating that to be a good citizen we need to work together *with* the government and not fight the system because there are some things that are beyond our sphere of influence. Part of this system that Mr. Skoreyko seemed to be imploring us to work cooperatively with is the system of rights.

The Thorny Idea of Personhood

Dr. Kingwell was asked: *How does philosophy encompass those that law doesn't recognize as citizens or persons?* To this he gave the following response:

"Citizen is a category that, for the most part, is understood to sit on top of the category, prior in ethical importance, of person. And philosophers have advanced many notions of what they think constitutes a person. By and large, none of you will be surprised to hear that what they think constitutes a person is someone who is capable of rationality, and this is a notion that has dominated the western tradition of philosophy for many hundreds of years. I think we are at a point where novel arguments – difficult but novel arguments – about the nature of personhood, are being grappled with. I will say for myself that I don't know yet where I come down on these questions. I'm quite convinced that the notion of personhood based on rationality, at least on exclusive rationality is inadequate, but I am genuinely puzzled and troubled by the alternatives I am forced to confront as a result of giving that up". He continued by saying that "sooner or later, as persons, we have to confront in our own lives what persons are. And I know many of you have already done that in practical, maybe not theoretical ways, but maybe both. But that *is* the underlying fundamental question".

A member of the disabled community made the comment that labeling people as disabled can really hurt and it creates a vicious circle in which they remained trapped. Mr. Skoreyko responded to her by saying that the way that the disabled can break away from the labels and the vicious circle is to be invited to participate more fully in the larger community of which they are a part. He further advised that the disabled have to let people know that they want to be treated as persons first, and as persons with disabilities second.

Us and Them

One man commented that a number of our relationships are adversarial. Another person pointed out that the idea of belonging is a tribalistic concept and when we try to extend

our circle of concern to a larger community, the notions of community and belonging become abstract and arid, and fail to capture our emotions in the same way. He added that our notion of belonging, of an 'us', is partly defined by having an affiliated notion of 'them', or of those that don't belong, and asks Dr. Kingwell how we can overcome this division.

Dr. Kingwell agreed with his analysis and offers the following reply in conclusion: "There are other historical ways in which people have come together, over myths of various kinds, myths of salvation, myths of discovery, myths of creation. And these are not necessarily dualistic in the same way. While I would never advocate the kind of thing that is characteristic of nationalism, there are forms of nationalism that are inward looking rather than dualistic. There are other possibilities in the human soul and what I would like to see if we can come up with is a myth of inclusion that could be inwardly energetic and dynamic. I don't know, I really don't, but I think we are on the way to something interesting here because the way we are talking is already pushing us beyond existing categories. When people talk about "let's think about those with disabilities for the gifts they give to us", we are already shifting out of a money economy, psychologically, into a gift economy. We are looking at how we can see commonalities among us that don't fit our existing self-understandings, not through negatively defining ourselves with somebody else, but by positive definition with this other".

Mark Kingwell's Saturday Morning Lecture

Mark Kingwell began his Saturday talk by summarizing some themes from last night's lecture before turning to new issues that would enrich and enliven the debate on citizenship, belonging, and contribution.

Influence of Individualism and Its Limitations

Dr. Kingwell points out that the way most of us understand ourselves is a result of the legacy of Rene Descartes. From him we get the idea that "the self is an interior consciousness, that you are all out there isolated in a way within yourself". On this view, the external world, and other conscious beings are "out there", also isolated within themselves. This notion of the self is one that many of us either explicitly or implicitly subscribe to. Dr. Kingwell states that, "We think we are isolated consciousnesses that have to reach out to find connection with the other, whom we presume to be conscious like ourselves, but about which we can know nothing direct. I cannot know your mind, you cannot know my mind. We use the tools, inadequate though they are, of language and gesture and institutions and touch to try and bridge this gap between isolated consciousnesses."

Dr. Kingwell suggests that the Cartesian picture of the self has been so dominant in the West that it is difficult, but still possible, for us to conceive of ourselves differently. The individualism that arises from this notion of self has given us the unique and powerful discourse of human rights, but it doesn't address our sense of connection with others. Dr. Kingwell says of individualism that "it obscures the shared life-world in which we exist. It obscures the fact that each one of us is only who we are because of others". He adds that "we are not isolated consciousnesses, we are collective achievements".

A New Understanding of Personhood

Since the Enlightenment, philosophers have favored the view that a person is a rational agent, or someone who has the capacity for rational thought and action. Dr. Kingwell points out that this criterion – rationality – is exclusive. He asks whether it is possible to give up this traditional understanding of personhood and instead understand it “as the class of entities with whom we are in relationship”. Although this conception of person creates new problems, Dr. Kingwell maintains that it approaches the question appropriately. Instead of determining essential traits for personhood in advance, we only need to adopt a stance of receptivity and openness to the possibility of relationship with the other.

Dr. Kingwell invokes Martin Buber’s work *I and Thou* to illustrate the two kinds of relationships that we can take up with others: I-It, and I-Thou. He describes the distinction between them as follows: “An I-It relationship treats the other, whatever it may be, an entity, object, a thing, a person, as instrumental, as something from whom I expect something. It puts the other in a condition of use.... The I-Thou relationship, by contrast, meets the other as someone who is meeting me too. Meets the other as an entity with something to give me, not as a transaction, but an insight; not a contribution, but a kind of listening. The receptivity of the I-Thou is infinite in possibility. The I-It is a totalizing relationship it controls for purposes, the I-Thou is an infinitizing relationship: you can’t tell how, where, and how far it will take you”.

Although Dr. Kingwell believes that this is the right direction in which to advance our understanding of personhood and citizenship, he also recognizes that it leads to difficult questions about the kinds of objects and entities we might be in relationship with and the kinds of duties of care and concern that will be a corollary of those relationships. As with many worthwhile issues, the deeper we go into the question the more difficult the philosophical debates become. It is a simple thing, he points out, to agree that things like participatory citizenship and justice are good things, but the dialogue becomes more complicated when we realize that these goals have costs, and solutions become less obvious.

From Theory to Practice or How Do We Do Any of This?

Dr. Kingwell drew his talk to a close by addressing the question: How do we make this real? He states that there are various ways to achieve change, but dialogue is the most basic and effective way to begin. You are always in dialogue, concluded Dr. Kingwell, “you are always listening and talking, hopefully sometimes listening more than talking...but you can only change one mind at a time. There are policy levers, there are structures, and these are vastly important, but unless there is the substance of the shared life-world that is discussion, care, relationship, unless there is the demanding commitment of you to the other, none of this will work”.

Commentaries

Myrna Kostash, the writer in residence at the University of Alberta, touches on several themes in her commentary. She concurs with Kingwell's rejection of individualism, saying that as a writer she knows she doesn't get to the page alone, and that "it is in somebody else's voice in which [she finds her] own". She adds that Dr. Kingwell's remarks about Martin Buber's notion of the I-Thou relationship can perhaps be linked up with the research of Ian Angus at Simon Fraser University who is pointing to the I-We relationship as a way of overcoming "the polarization of the private self and the ethnic group". Further, she indexes the church as a place where "no one is ever lost to the idea of collective".

With respect to Dr. Kingwell's remarks about personhood, Ms. Kostash expressed a worry about animals and whether an animal's inability to imagine our pain, as we can imagine theirs, can limit our obligation to them. This comment seems to question whether the relationships we are in have to be fully reciprocal for us to have duties of care towards those entities with whom we are in relation. Finally, echoing some ideas from Dr. Houle's commentary, Ms. Kostash questions why collectivism such as socialism and feminism have been subject to radical post-modern critique but capitalism has not.

Doug Stollery, an Edmonton lawyer and philanthropist, centers his commentary on what citizenship means in the law, in hopes that it will make Dr. Kingwell's notion of citizenship more transparent in terms of how it differs from the traditional legalistic notion. The legal notion of citizenship is that "citizenship guarantees certain rights and benefits to a group of people in our society. And that group of people is known as citizens. And under Canada's citizenship law that largely is based on being born in Canada but you can also become part of that group if you immigrate to Canada and you meet a number of requirements". Mr. Stollery points out that the implication of the legal notion of citizenship in Canada is that there are some people who are not citizens, and these people are denied the rights and benefits that those who *are* citizens receive. Citizenship, then, in its legal sense, is exclusive and discriminatory.

Mr. Stollery also made a few remarks about one of the crowning achievements of individualism – human rights. He shared a story of how he defended a teacher who was fired for being gay, and in his defense he invoked the powerful discourse of rights. What Mr. Stollery wanted to underscore is that rights *are* effective, and we need to be careful that we don't throw out notions of rights and human rights in our rejection of individualism.

Maggie Hodgson, a member of the Aboriginal community, is currently a special advisor on residential schools with Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Ms. Hodgson begins by reflecting on the notion that 'everything is related', which she believes is the essence of what Dr. Kingwell is talking about. She shares a fascinating story about spending time with the physicist David Bohm, who once he developed the atomic bomb, decided to leave that line of work because he realized everything is related.

She continues by saying that although everything is related, we need to start with ourselves, re-iterating Kingwell's remark that "it's up to you". This is a simple statement but a very challenging one. In her community, it is said that the longest distance is from our head to our heart, which is the distance that lies between thinking and action. Therein lies the challenge: to translate theory into transformative action in the world. Ms. Hodgson also emphasizes the need to celebrate successes, and recognize our social and political accomplishments, while continuing to fight for a world that is more just.

Bruce Uditsky is the Executive Director of the Alberta Association for Community Living, and offered the final commentary. Mr. Uditsky, also a family member of a person with disabilities, began with a rich phenomenological description of what it is like to be in a loving relationship with them, of the challenges of that relationship, of the pain of exclusion, and of the feeling of rejection from society. The greatest offences – dehumanization, violence, marginalization – he argued, are often committed by citizens in the name of the greater social good.

Mr. Uditsky warns us to not embrace a new idea of citizenship without sufficient dialogue and critique. He believes that citizenship is a limited idea, and may remain as such, "but if we rush into the idea for people with disabilities, that through citizenship you will achieve personhood, we will fail again, just as it was true for the human rights movement or any other initiative that we have chosen and embraced and moved quickly and left people with disabilities and their families floundering in our wake, in our path, looking for a new idea". Mr. Uditsky urges us to think reflectively, engage in meaningful dialogue and challenge each other to deepen our thinking about citizenship.

Echoing other commentators, Mr. Uditsky points out that the legal notion of citizenship is "blatantly discriminatory" and sees those with disabilities as social burdens. He states that he believes that Dr. Kingwell's work creates an invitation for a more inclusive ideal of citizenship, but it is still in progress and "until we come to a conclusion I would want, with respect to who is and who isn't a person, citizenship will remain an exclusive idea and particularly threaten those with the most significant disabilities. That is, it is not only a place of potential membership, but it also, in its exclusivity, is a place or a means of potential, serious harm". For Mr. Uditsky, further debate about citizenship must be based on a solid understanding of what constitutes personhood, a question that he feels should receive primary attention.

Community Dialogue: Café Parlez

The commentaries were followed by an afternoon of discussion organized as a "World Café", which is a structured format that fosters community dialogue. Mark Cabaj and David Kahane, café hosts, explain the process of the world café, and provide compelling historical examples of how conversations led to social transformation such as the Velvet Revolution and the Civil Rights Movement.

Question 1: What does it mean to be a good citizen?

Walking from table to table, I was fortunate to be able to listen in on many rich and engaging conversations. At one table someone suggested that being a good citizen is like being a good neighbour, which entailed caring for and having respect for others.

At another table one individual was meditating on the image of a spiral and how it models ever-widening connections among people. A discussion began about what it means to be connected and that our feeling of being connected becomes more diffuse the further our circles of connection extend. A member of the disabled community pointed out that citizenship in Canada gives her acceptance, and that in Germany, under the Nazi regime, she would not have lived. She is asked if she feels like a contributing member of society and replies 'yes'. Another person adds that citizenship involves both rights and responsibilities, which leads to a discussion of the fact that the notion of responsibility is exclusionary because disabled persons are often not able to conceptualize its meaning. Someone comments on the question itself, saying that as soon as you start to define what good citizenship is, it becomes exclusionary. This provokes suggestions for a more inclusive idea of citizenship. One suggestion is that a good citizen is someone who puts good energy into the cosmos, which can be done through something as simple as a smile. Another proposes that we can define what is good as that which moves us to cohesion and what is bad as that which moves us to disintegration.

Another group of individuals were discussing the idea that perhaps good citizenship is respecting one another's boundaries. A person who works with the disabled community points out that the people that she works with do invade people's boundaries and do so frequently, so that definition would be very exclusionary. The group at this table seems reluctant to use the word 'good' to qualify citizenship. They are reluctant to judge, and it is proposed that perhaps part of being a good citizen is being someone who doesn't judge.

Question 2: Are some people excluded from being full citizens? Does this need to change? How?

The discussion at one table revolves around naming forms of implicit and explicit discrimination. This leads someone to make the point that some people are excluded from relationships and others are excluded from access to resources, and that these forms of exclusion are either covert or overt.

A woman at another table is trying to understand why people fail to offer reasonable accommodation to her disabled daughter. She describes her frustration that she can't get the bus driver to even help her daughter down the bus steps. The group agrees that the source of both exclusion and of change is the individual, but that it is the social structures that all individuals are embedded in that don't allow the disabled to become engaged citizens.

Question 3: How would changing our picture of a good citizen make a difference in people's day-to-day life?

At one table, the group is discussing the idea that if we change our notion of good citizenship to include more than those who can and do contribute financially, it would make a difference in their lives. A member of the disabled community adds that the opportunity to have their voice heard and to share their ideas is one thing that we as citizens can do to make a difference in the lives of the disabled community. The group also discusses how it is insufficient to leave these issues at the level of dialogue. In order to make a real difference, they feel that dialogue must be only a starting point to more meaningful forms of action.

The people at another table discuss the idea that difference is limiting, and instead we should consider what we have in common so that we can build bonds of solidarity. A disabled person at the table holds up a picture they drew where everyone is different and holding hands to show that they are in relation.

Yet another group is discussing how in the aboriginal tradition the best two gifts you can give are a kind voice and kind eyes, and to be able to give these things no matter how hard things are or how tired you are is a true gift. Further, these are gifts that the traditionally excluded can give. An individual points out that we also need to be receptive to these gifts, and that some are not able to see a smile and enthusiasm as a gift, and instead understand it as a distraction or nuisance.

The conversation overheard at yet another table focused on the hard choices one needs to make to be a good citizen. One individual reveals that she has arranged her life, choosing to live without certain conveniences, so that she can be more open to others. Another adds that “citizenship is a daily ride”. It is walking out the door every day prepared to meet the other; it is making those small choices; it is constant vigilance. Fear, as an obstacle to good citizenship, is raised and the group discusses ways in which fear makes us less open and receptive to encounters with the other.

Summaries of the Discussion from the “Waiters”

Denis Bell, from PLAN Edmonton, chose to bring out one or two comments that he heard in response to each question. In response to question one, Mr. Bell heard a lot of discussion around the idea of contribution, contribution as being, and how we can contribute in times when we have nothing to give. He was struck by one woman’s comment that “being is a type of gift that we share” and the story of how her grandmother, in her dying, became a point in the universe around which relationships formed.

In response to question two, Mr. Bell was struck by how quickly an individual, given their fragility and vulnerability just by virtue of their humanity, can move from belonging to being on the outside. He shared a moving story about how his friend, once a dynamic woman, is now institutionalized with Alzheimer’s Disease, and how this really made concrete the idea that one moment we belong and the next we don’t.

Regarding question three, Mr. Bell shared what he had heard from a woman with a child with disabilities. She talked about having a different world, and said that “It would

change my life dramatically; it would change my daughter's life dramatically. It truly would be a global village where everyone played a part in raising my daughter, and I would feel safe for my daughter because she was safe and secure".

Kathie Bell, another café waiter, shared that what she found most intriguing was the coming together of people who didn't know each other, and the tendency at each café table to make the table circular, so that no one was at the head of the table, and it was conducive to dialogue. There was an attitude of respect, interest, and curiosity among the participants. She continued with her observations saying that initially the dialogue was quiet, but it geared up with energy quickly. People tended to speak from their particularized experiences, and from their heart, and avoided making abstractions or generalizations. With respect to the content of the discussions, Mrs. Bell heard several tables struggle with the idea that we need to recognize difference, but in a way that avoids judgment. In addition, the theme that change "needs to start with the self" was prevalent.

Bruce Morito, a philosophy professor, and third café waiter, commented that most of the discussions he overheard focused on the definition of citizenship and its exclusionary properties. Further, questions of what it means to contribute were raised in the framework necessary to understand new notions of contribution. Comments about fear and how to deal with fear, as well as comments about human nature and whether it is in our nature to exclude, were also important themes that participants struggled with.

Café Summary

Dr. Cheryl Crocker, who teaches Rehabilitation Services at Grant MacEwan College and at the University of Alberta, was charged with the task of capturing the essence of the last two days.

After summarizing the weekend's events, Dr. Crocker points out that there are still many outstanding questions: How do we engage the other and how do we know who that is? How do we balance our tendencies toward individualism with our collective responsibilities? What can we learn from other cultures about citizenship? How can we make this matter to those who don't know that it matters or who think it doesn't matter at all?

She concludes by saying that, "What matters, I think, to all of us is that we have deeply personal relationships that allow us to celebrate differences, to embrace those, to honour those. I see this session as the beginning. I think that we have begun today to build relationships with each other, to build community, and to honour the contribution that came from each person that came Friday night and all day today to have a discussion about this very issue... Our challenges are to find a way to continue this dialogue, and not just continue it, but expand it".