
Diversity is Here to Stay

by Peter Ng and Ken McAteer

Pacific Coast Council (PCC) has an active and very capable Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) ready to carry out and to promote the Strategic Directive Regarding Diversity issued in June 2004. The key objectives of the National Strategic Directive are:

- To provide a framework for building diversity within the organization while remaining consistent with the Mission;
- To both increase the number of members and enrich the diversity within the membership; and
- To foster understanding and respect for differences by providing members with the opportunity to engage in dialogue.

This Strategic Directive is in line with the following objectives that our PCC Diversity Advisory Committee has pursued during the six years that it has been in existence.

Objectives

- Inclusion, integration and acceptance of all diversity within Scouting
- Systemic change within Scouting to reflect and empower all forms of diversity
- Removal of access barriers to youth and families who wish to join Scouting
- Achievement of unique aims through alternative Scouting programs where necessary
- Continuation of adapting policies, programs and practices within Scouting in order to promote diversity
- Continuation of our emphasis on reaching out for specific diverse groups and cultures
- Promotion of networking among our partnerships with key agencies and institutions that work with diverse groups

- Greater understanding and appreciation of diversity within Scouting
- Development of resource materials to meet diverse needs
- Increased cross-cultural training of leaders and staff members
- Involvement of diverse groups in outreach and identification of community leaders
- Involvement of diverse groups in training of current Scout leaders and continuation of systemic change
- Continuation of the project's objectives, processes and procedures through the hiring of additional staff and reassignment of some responsibilities
- Increased diverse representation and participation at all levels of Scouting
- Acquisition of appropriate resource materials.

Progress

The DAC has made significant progress in achieving these objectives. We have met with many agencies and cultural leaders to remove barriers for youth to join Scouting and we have made presentations in all Basic Training courses to ensure all new leaders are aware of the diversity in Scouting. We started a project group with an ESL (English as second language) class teacher to assist new immigrants to adapt to Canadian culture. The result is positive and we are in the process of introducing this concept to the Vancouver School Board.

Newest Group

The most recent group that we have started is called the Knights of Kensington (near Knight Street and nearby Kensington Park in Vancouver). This group features a wide range of ethnic and economic diversity that is supported by experienced leaders from our council as well as the elementary school that most of the youth attend.

Rewards

Over the years that the DAC has been operating, we have developed a

clearer definition of the diverse needs yet to be met for the many individuals, families and agencies with whom we are working and with whom we would welcome working. We have actively included and integrated into our planning and communication the South Asian, Mainland Chinese, Hispanic, First Nations, Filipino, Korean and Iranian communities. We have continued our active involvement with individuals and agencies representing the wide range of differences within our community.

Our partnership with many agencies has been rewarding in terms of sharing common aims and understanding each other's needs. This has involved meeting with community leaders, ethnic media, consulates, churches, schools, governmental committees, community agencies and other not-for-profit groups. We have achieved a better understanding of access barriers and we are implementing the processes required to remove them. We have learned the importance of involving diverse groups, including youth, at vital decision-making levels. This has led to a wider influence of diverse groups within Scouting, a shared understanding of each other's needs and a resolution to correct inequities that exist.

In the upcoming year, we will include more youth involvement and more action in outreaching. The DAC is now co-chaired by a youth representative and the Deputy Council Commissioner for Diversity. We are in the process of having each of our six areas send a Deputy Area Commissioner for Diversity to our committee meetings in order to service the areas more directly and effectively.

Our main focus is to bring enjoyment, harmony, inclusion and character building to all youth and leaders in our community and to welcome them into Scouting. We know that we can count on all members of Scouts Canada for their continued support in achieving our objectives. X

– Peter Ng is Deputy Council Commissioner for Diversity, Pacific Coast Council, and Ken McAteer is Council Commissioner, Pacific Coast Council.