

National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation

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a report by
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A Report on the 2004 National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation

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Contents

Introduction	1
Who Made the 2004 Conference Happen	1
A Bit of History	4
How the 2004 Conference Was Different	6
Highlights of the 2004 NCDD Conference	7
Now What? What Was Learned and What NCDD is Doing About It	22
- There is great need for local/regional gatherings and networks	22
- Many people are just entering this field and need oriented	23
- We need to handle issues of inclusion more openly and effectively	24
- We need to develop ways to bring these processes to decision-makers	25
- We need to develop quality practitioner tools for common challenges	25
- We need to expand our focus from National to Global	28
What Else Needs to be Done?	28
More Quotes from Conference Participants	29

"Congratulations on a conference that provided knowledge, heart wisdom, true challenges and great food. Mino and I felt so supported in our work and truly believe we have found a home, a community of those who can cherish the fragile connections and strong ties of dialogue."

- Marcia Kannry, The Dialogue Project

Introduction

In October 2004, over 300 people came together at Regis University in Denver, Colorado for the second National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation. Many participants identified as leaders in the emerging dialogue and deliberation field—practitioners who are breaking new ground in communities and organizations; creators of new methodologies for bringing people’s voices into governance and community problem-solving; scholars who are researching the nuances and implications of this growing field.

Others identified as “newbies” to this work. Some were young people who wanted to learn whether this was a feasible field to plan to work in when they graduate. Some had switched careers mid-life, looking for work that had more meaning for them.

College faculty, administrators, staff, and students attended the 2004 NCDD conference. Independent consultants, directors and employees at nonprofit organizations, government officials, artists, activists, trainers, and meeting facilitators—all attended and found a place at the conference.

And they were kept busy. Conference attendees enjoyed a variety of plenary sessions that introduced them to large-group dialogue methods while enabling the community to explore issues relevant to the field. They each had to choose four of 57 two- and three-hour workshops delivered by their peers. And through the use of graphic facilitation and playback theatre, they experienced how the arts can enhance dialogue and deliberation.

People came from all across the U.S. and from Australia, Canada, Greece, The Netherlands, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, and Uganda with a variety of different goals in mind. Most wanted to network and develop relationships with others who do dialogue and deliberation work. Many came to be inspired by leaders in the field who were speaking or doing presentations. Many attended the conference for the opportunity to experience and learn about the spectrum of dialogic and deliberative practices. Some participants came in hopes of examining key issues facing this developing field, and some attended in order to build their skills at doing this work.



The main purpose of the gathering was to encourage conference attendees and planners, together, to continue developing this important, growing field of practice. Networking, experiencing different methods, sharing learnings, hearing from leaders in the field, exploring key issues facing the field—all of these are field-building activities, and all were given a place at the 2004 National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation.

The conference focused on three broad questions: “How can we have a greater collective impact on the challenging issues of our time?”, “How can we develop intelligently and wholeheartedly as a community of practice?”, and “What do we need to know and do individually to enhance our capacity to do this work?”

In this report, I will recognize all of the people and groups who made the 2004 conference a success, I will outline the “history” of the 2004 and 2002 gatherings and what happened in between, and I will talk about how the 2004 conference was different from the 2002 event. I will describe the main elements of the 2004 conference, outline what was learned from the 2004 event and what NCDD is doing about it, and list some other actions that need to be taken to ensure the sustainability and success of this burgeoning field.

Who Made the 2004 Conference Happen

Many people and organizations helped make the 2004 National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation a success. A small number of foundations, organizations and individuals contributed financially, nearly 50 people volunteered their time to serve on the conference planning team and a few extraordinary individuals facilitated sub-teams.

Sponsors and Supporters

The 2004 National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation was funded, in part, by the *William & Flora Hewlett*

Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

\$30,000 of NCDD's 2004-2006 grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation supported the conference. \$24,000 provided registration, lodging, and travel scholarships for people who otherwise may not have been able to attend the conference, and \$6,000 enabled the core conference team to meet at the conference site for a face-to-face planning session. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund provided us with \$10,000 for scholarships to help more young people attend the conference.

Along with the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, the conference was Co-Sponsored by *The Forum Foundation*, *the International Association for Public Participation*, and by *Regis University's Institute on the Common Good*. Co-Sponsors contributed \$5,000 each to the conference.

Special mention must be given to one of our Co-Sponsors, Regis University's Institute on the Common Good. The conference was held at Regis University, a Jesuit university in Denver, Colorado, due to the generous support of Paul Alexander, Executive Director of Regis' Institute on the Common Good, and other Regis staff. Paul and others at Regis contributed many hours of their time to conference planning and logistics, and their support provided us with an affordable venue that met our needs.

Partners of the conference, each of whom contributed \$1,000, included the *Animating Democracy Initiative of Americans for the Arts*, the *Conflict Resolution Institute at the University of Denver*, the *Jefferson Center*, the *Pennsylvania Center for Civic Life*, the *Public Conversations Project*, the *Study Circles Resource Center*, and the *Western Justice Center*.

The Conference Planning Team

As with our 2002 conference, this gathering was planned in a highly collaborative manner, with nearly 50 people from across the entire spectrum of practice serving actively on the planning team.

Key players on the planning team included:

Paul K. Alexander

Director of the Institute for the Common Good at Regis University and Site Liaison for NCDD 2004

Andy Fluke

Creative Director for the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation and the 2004 Conference

Sandy Heierbacher

Convenor of the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation and Director of the 2004 Conference

Leilani Rashida Henry

President of Being and Living Enterprises and Facilitator of the Design Team for NCDD 2004

Najeeba Syeed Miller

Executive Director of the Western Justice Center and Facilitator of the Diversity Team for NCDD 2004

Polly Riddims

Partner, Fusion Partnerships, Inc., and Facilitator of the Logistics Team for NCDD 2004

Scott Russell

Associate Vice President of HNTB Corporation and Facilitator of the Public Relations Team for NCDD 2004

Miriam Wyman

Principal Consultant, Practicum Limited and Facilitator of the Assessment Team for NCDD 2004

Additional members of the 2004 conference planning team included:

Reena Bernards, *Dialogue Project*
SY Bowland, *Practitioner-Scholar Research Institute (PRASI)*
Michael Briand, *The Institute for Democratic Dialogue and Deliberation*
Susan S. Clark, *Common Knowledge*
Tim Erickson, *Politalk*
Bill Fulton, *Colorado Civic Canopy*
Maribeth Goodman, *The Goodman Group, Inc.*
Scott C. Hammond, *School of Business - Utah Valley State College*
Maggie Herzig, *Public Conversations Project*
Katie Howard, *Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center*
Les Ihara, Jr., *Hawaii State Senate*
Michele Woods Jones, *Cobb & Henry Consulting Division*
Irene Kao, *Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, University of New Hampshire*
Miki Kashtan, *Center for Nonviolent Communication and Bay NVC*
Beth Katz, *University of Michigan*
Ron Kertzner, *ChoicePoint Consulting, Inc.*
James T. Knauer, *Pennsylvania Center for Civic Life*
Pam Korza, *Americans for the Arts*
Leah Lamb, *The Performance Initiative*
Theo. R. Leverenz, *EPPA Consulting*
Ben Levi, *Levi Consulting Group*
Stephani Roy McCallum, *Circle Associates*
Diane Miller, *Envision Central Texas*
Jen Murphy, *Building Collaborative Solutions, Inc.*
Anne Neal, *Vision-Mission-Strategy, Inc.*
Phil Neisser, *SUNY Potsdam*
Kenoli Oleari, *Horizons of Change*
Julie Pratt, *Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia*
Barbara Schaeffer Bacon, *Americans for the Arts*
Attica Scott, *Kentucky Jobs with Justice*
Ray Seigfried, *Christiana Care Health System*
Barry Sherman, *The Intentional Living Institute*
Susan Skjei, *SaneSystems*
Elana Felice Stanger, *Diversity Arts*
Anne Rogers, *Forum on Restorative Community Justice*
Mary Adams Trujillo, *Practitioner-Scholar Research Institute (PRASI)*
Nikki Weinstein, *FOCUS St. Louis*
Patricia Wilson, *Graduate Program in Community & Regional Planning, University of Texas*
Sandra Zagon, *Public Involvement Consultant/Research Associate*



Additional Supporters of the Conference

We are grateful to the following groups, each of whom provided significant in-kind donations and support.

Alchemy
The Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford
The Co-Intelligence Institute
The Deliberative Democracy Consortium
The Dialogue Group
Diversity Arts
The Global Negotiation Project at Harvard Law School
Heartland Institute
The International Institute for Sustained Dialogue
The Kettering Foundation
The National Issues Forums Institute
What is Enlightenment? Magazine
The World Café

And the following people and organizations made donations to the conference scholarship fund:

Kathy Covert, Associate Strategist, Federal Geographic Data Committee
Center for Multicultural Excellence at the University of Denver
John Esterle, Executive Director, The Whitman Institute
Deborah Flick, President, Collaborative Solutions Group
Nancy Glock-Grueneich, HIGHER EDge
Maribeth Goodman, The Goodman Group, Inc.
Scott Hammond, Professor, Utah Valley State College
Joan Heron, Retired Professor, California State Fresno
Patrick Hill, Evergreen State College
Sharda Miller, Voices of Vision
Curt Paddock, President, Trajectory Consultants
Charlie Pillsbury, Executive Director, Community Mediation, Inc.
Julie Pratt
Tobin Quereau, Austin Community College
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Marilyn Saunders, Skills for the 21st Century
John Spady, Forum Foundation
Jim Snow George Mason University's ICAR Program
William & Flora Hewlett Foundation

A Bit of History

The second National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation built on the success of the first NCDD conference, which took place in Alexandria, Virginia in October 2002.

The 2002 National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation marked the first attempt to bring together practitioners, scholars, activists, and artists from across the entire spectrum of dialogue and deliberation practice. Before the 2002 conference, deliberative democracy pioneers had been brought together, organization development practitioners had been convened, and events had brought together those who practice specific methods like Study Circles and World Café—but there had not yet been an attempt to convene all of these groups and others who practice, study, and promote dialogue and deliberation.

Around the time of NCDD's first conference, people and groups committed to finding new and better ways to give

people a voice in decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution were beginning to sense a shift. Some felt a field was developing, and others called it a movement. Only one thing was certain: whatever "it" was, it was disconnected and disorganized.

The field-movement-community of practice was emerging from the grassroots, and each disconnected network had developed their own unique terminology, looked to their own thought leaders for direction and inspiration, had their own ways of connecting with their colleagues, and were familiar with their specific set of resources and tools.



Graphic facilitators from Alchemy took beautiful notes during all of the plenary sessions at the 2004 conference.

As a result, a group organizing community-wide Study Circles in Ohio could not benefit from the years of experience of the Jewish-Palestinian living room dialogue leaders in San Francisco. The success of one-time dialogues in bookstores and coffee shops in Seattle could not provide older dialogue programs in Boston with needed ideas of how to engage more of the public in their process. An excellent dialogue and deliberation training program in Austin would be offered without even the practitioners in that state finding out about it in time to register. And the success and impact of a range of new online techniques remained unknown to the vast majority of organizers of community discussions across the country.

This kind of disconnect was understandable given the tremendous grassroots growth in the use and development of dialogic and deliberative processes in the past decade alone. But for these processes to be refined and the practice to continue to be developed, we needed to establish ways to stay connected with one another. We needed to develop ways to share strategies and learnings, ask questions and get good answers quickly, get the word out about trainings and other opportunities, evaluate programs effectively, and develop common terminology for this work. We knew that all of these things are essential for the growth of the field and the future of these processes.

The 2002 conference was the first step. It was a highly participatory, high-energy event which brought dialogue and deliberation pioneers together across models, topics, regions, applications, and philosophies for a unique learning, networking, and planning experience. Dozens of top-notch workshops introduced conference participants to a plethora of dialogue methods, models, and tools. And three plenary sessions took participants through a dialogic and deliberative process—using a small group dialogue technique on the first day, AmericaSpeaks 21st Century Town Meeting on the second, and a Study Circles-style action forum on the final day—to help them determine what actions we should take as a group to move our field forward.

Participants developed a blueprint of action for strengthening this emerging field, and twelve groups formed to address specific needs that are vital to dialogue and deliberation practitioners and the greater D&D community:

- Networking and Communications within the D&D Community
- Research & Development
- Mission and Vision
- Connecting to the Arts
- Creating a Toolbox for D&D Practitioners
- Expanding Diversity and Connections
- Marketing Dialogue to the Media and the Public
- Integrating Dialogue into Educational Environments
- Meeting Practitioners' Funding Needs
- Convening and Coordinating Nationwide Dialogues
- Involving International Practitioners and Issues
- Networking and Collaboration Among Online D&D Practitioners

Because of the relationships participants developed and the learnings and resources shared, participants at the 2002 conference left the event more willing and able to share their successes and strategies with others in the field and more informed about where to go to learn from the successes and strategies of others. Many participants left the

conference feeling—for the first time—that they are part of an important, growing field of practice.

After the 2002 conference concluded, the 50 organizations that had formed the Coalition for a National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation decided to continue working together to strengthen and unite the dialogue and deliberation community. They become the founding members of the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD).

Between the 2002 and 2004 conferences, in large part due to NCDD's communication strategies and resource-rich website but also due to the work of other organizations and networks, a recognizable "dialogue and deliberation community" began to develop. Sharing resources, news, and opportunities became the norm, and common terminology was informally developed so we could all "speak the same language." The community's biggest challenges became common knowledge, and people began talking about how we can address these challenges collectively and how else we can strengthen this field. NCDD continues to address the disconnect in this emerging field through our activities and collaborative projects, and through the resources and opportunities we provide our members and others involved in dialogue and deliberation work.

How the 2004 Conference Was Different

The 2004 conference reflected this growth in our field of practice. Instead of asking participants to think about their needs as individuals, our needs as a field, and what we may be able to do together to meet those needs, we asked participants to consider some of the most pressing—and most complicated—issues this field is facing. In particular, participants examined questions like:

- How can we make a greater collective impact on the challenging issues of our time?
- How can we determine fairly which processes work best in specific circumstances?
- Where are we going as a field or community of practice, and where should we be going?

We encouraged participants to grapple with these issues through large-group processes including World Café, a unique "Reflective Panel," Open Space Technology, and Playback Theatre.

The content and focus of the 2004 conference were not the only things that were different from the first gathering; conference participants were notably different as well. Participants, for the most part, were better prepared. Most participants had more awareness about what they had expertise in and what they were new to, and they knew what they wanted to learn more about. At the same time, many more conference participants were brand new to the field than in 2002, and these new practitioners came in the hopes of being oriented into this broad field of practice and mentored into this work by more experienced conference attendees.

We saw a notable difference in people's openness to different methods. At the 2002 conference, some of the more experimental methods that were presented during workshops were not well-received; people were not convinced that some new dialogic and deliberative models had much potential. At the 2004 conference we saw a clear shift in people's willingness to give new methods a chance. Conference attendees were curious about their colleagues' experiments and seemed to recognize that a wide variety of methods and techniques are required, and that different approaches can be useful in different contexts. People knew each other and each other's work better, and they seemed to have more respect for each other's knowledge and niches.

We also noticed that people's expectations of the conference and the Coalition—and even of one another—were different from the 2002 gathering. Conference participants' expectations were much higher all around. At the first conference, people weren't sure what to expect and seemed to be amazed at what a group of mostly volunteers was able to accomplish together in a short amount of time. Not expecting anything in particular, they appreciated everything. At the 2004 conference, people expected the plenary sessions to be ground-breaking and the discussion to be top-notch. They expected workshop presenters to be highly sensitive to issues of diversity, and to handle unexpected conflict effectively. And they expected all presentations to provide them with information that was new and immediately applicable to them.

People's expectations were high, and many people's expectations were met. On average, participants rated their overall conference experience a 4.1 out of 5—just slightly lower than the 4.21 rating participants gave the 2002 event. But conference planners may not have been ready to meet such a drastic shift in expectations from the first conference to the second, and after the conference was over, we felt that we could have done a number of things differently in order to better meet people's high expectations.

Below I will describe the major elements of the 2004 National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation...

Highlights of the 2004 NCDD Conference

In the needs assessment we conducted months before the conference, we asked potential conference attendees how they felt the 2004 NCDD conference could best support the growing dialogue & deliberation community. Here are a few of the responses:

- By expanding upon the progress made at the 2002 conference.
- By encouraging thinking and working at both a regional and national level.
- By mapping the streams of work so that we each are able to see our own place in the community.
- By supporting research on dialogue and deliberation, and encouraging practitioners to collaborate with researchers. We need to identify research projects that will have both practical value and research quality.
- By helping people discover what others are working on; finding ways to leverage knowledge and energy.
- By creating forums through which to explore the edges of this work—innovative approaches, new dilemmas, etc., recognizing that this work changes with the times.
- By assisting people in being known and knowing others in a meaningful way. Building relationships and connections.
- By producing clarity about what this movement is and how it can link with other movements fostering learning, personal growth and civic/community action and service.
- By having plenty of time for structured networking and meeting people in the field. One of the many wonderful things about the 2002 event was feeling close to the beating heart of a movement towards engaged democracy.
- By focusing on evaluation tools and strategies that would produce information that would appeal to potential funders.
- By bringing the community an ever-deepening experience over time. Not a traditional conference experience; rather the unfolding through both a large-group process with open space for networking, and space for integration/processing.
- By collectively developing an effective strategy for marketing and promoting dialogue and deliberation on a national and international level.
- By helping people learn how to obtain the support/attention of politicians, media and others outside the D&D community.
- By providing opportunities for participants to learn from one another—good experiences and not so good; and get re-energized, re-inspired to keep on keeping on.
- By providing people with immediately applicable skills and tools.



This was quite a tall order for a 3-day gathering. People who attended the 2004 came with these and many other expectations and hopes. The planning team worked hard to make the 2004 gathering a high-quality, relevant, productive, enjoyable event aimed at advancing our young field and supporting those in it. Below are descriptions and outcomes of each of the primary elements of the 2004 conference.

Networking Reception:

After the conference opening, lunch, and two workshops, participants gathered for an innovative networking session. During the self-organized networking reception, participants enjoyed a stand-up tapas dinner while mingling and flowing in and out of semi-structured discussions. Before the gathering, people who had registered for the conference were asked to consider hosting table discussions centered around a topic they had a special interest in. Over a dozen conference participants planned topics ahead of time, and more organized topics at the networking reception. Pre-planned topics reflected a range of interests, including:

- Dialogue & deliberation research
- Jewish-Palestinian sustained dialogue

- Linking dialogue and deliberation to governance
- Integrating electronic and face-to-face dialogue
- Deepening democracy
- Involving legislators in D&D activities
- Dialogue in college teaching
- Deliberative democracy as collective intelligence
- Statewide budget deliberation in Minnesota
- LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) issues
- Colorado / Civic Canopy
- D&D and spiritual growth
- D&D in Texas
- Arts and civic dialogue

People gravitated to the cocktail tables marked with topics that interested them, and they used their informal time together not to engage in in-depth discussion about the issues, but to network with others who share their interests. Our goal was to spark new relationships that could lead to collaboration and knowledge-sharing in the future.

Jim Knauer, then-Director of the Pennsylvania Center for Civic Life at Lock Haven University, organized this innovative session.

World Café:

Conference participants transitioned from the networking reception to the World Café, where they were greeted with desserts, coffee, and live jazz music. In addition to enabling participants to experience an authentic World Café, hosted by none other than the co-creator of the method, Juanita Brown, we provided an engaging conversational space for conference participants to identify 1) shared values, 2) the unique contributions of the dialogue & deliberation community, and 3) shared hopes for this community.

The World Café is a simple yet powerful conversational process for fostering constructive dialogue, accessing collective intelligence, and creating innovative possibilities for action, particularly in large groups. The process is simple, yet often yields surprising results. In a World Café gathering, you join several other people at a Café-style table or in a small conversation cluster to explore a question or issue that really matters to your life, work, or community. Others are seated nearby in similar groups exploring similar questions at the same time. People are noting down or sketching out key ideas on the Café's paper tablecloths or large cards.

From these intimate conversations, members carry key ideas and insights into new small groups. This cross-pollination of perspectives is one of the hallmarks of the World Café. As people and ideas connect together in progressive rounds of conversation, collective knowledge grows and evolves. A sense of the larger whole becomes real, and innovative possibilities for action are made visible.

After several rounds of conversations, participants were asked to consider "Thinking about the whole conversation we've had tonight, what is the question that resonates most for you regarding our future as a community?"



Our graphic facilitator made questions come alive on the "Wall of Inquiry" during the World Cafe plenary on the first evening.

People's questions, which they jotted down on index cards that were collected, were varied, insightful, and fascinating. We were able to sort the questions into four broad themes:

- Work we need to do internally as a community
- The big picture/culture change
- Inclusion, spreading our reach and expanding the community
- Our individual work and motivations

Below is just a small sampling of the questions participants were holding at the end of the World Café.

Questions about the work we need to do internally as a community:

- How can we as a community develop a toolbox for broader community use, that is user-friendly, and gives people models, specific formats, a sense of empowerment to - practice D&D where they are?
- What are the limitations of dialogue practices that we are unwilling to investigate because our identities, careers, or hopes are so caught up in advocating dialogue?
- What accelerators/leverage points for social change are we not seeing/using as a community?

Questions about the big picture/culture change:

- What would society look like if all members engaged frequently in dialogue with the institutional infrastructure to support dialogue?
- How can individual transformation that occurs through dialogue lead to collective transformation and systemic change?
- How can we make the essence of D&D part of our way of life/our culture, rather than technological fixes for cultural ills?

Questions about inclusion, spreading our reach and expanding the community:

- How do we take the energy, commitment and spirit of this group out into the world and build/create more of it so others can have this experience?
- How/when can the "dialogue & deliberation" community be less America-centrist?
- Who is missing from "this community"?
- How can we equalize power imbalances so that the individual/groups that perceive themselves as less powerful can fully and honestly participate without fear of reprisal?

Questions about our individual work and motivations:

- What can I do when I go home to bring dialogue to both the grassroots and leaders of my community?
- Does "walking the talk" of being a D&D practitioner include being "egoless"? Is ego part of the authentic self or not?
- What support do we each need to access our deepest truth, our authentic selves and to share those voices in creating a just and sustainable world?

Workshops:

We offered a total of 59 workshops at the 2004 NCDD conference: 47 two-hour workshops and 12 3-hour workshops. Each participant could attend two workshops on the first day of the conference, and two workshops on the second day. Workshops focused on skill-building, knowledge-building and movement-building, and spanned the spectrum of dialogic and deliberative practice.

Workshop presenters included well-respected leaders in the field such as Tom Atlee, Chris Carlson, Ned Crosby, Jim Fishkin, Deborah Flick, Glenna Gerard, and many others. Workshops ranged from introductions to specific approaches to collaborative sessions tackling key issues facing the field. Participants learned about evaluating their programs, specific intergroup conflicts, international efforts, building practitioner networks, strengthening dialogue and deliberation through use of the arts, working with the media, and much more.

Below is a sampling of the wonderful workshops presented at the conference:

Breakthrough Initiatives in Governing WITH the People: The Australian Experience

Dr. Janette Hartz-Karp, JHK Quality Consultants

As a result of the last 4 years of planning with the community, Western Australia is now one of the world leaders in innovative approaches to deliberative democracy. Janette's presentation will outline the variety of techniques that have been applied, adapted and combined, including Citizen's Juries, Consensus Conferences, Consensus Forums, Deliberative Surveys, Multi Criteria Analysis Workshops, and "21st Century Town Meetings." The focus will be on how representativeness, deliberation and influence have been sought, and what has been learned. Participants will gain an understanding about the ways in which different deliberative democracy techniques have been applied and adapted in Western Australia, and will examine the critical success factors of deliberative democracy initiatives.

Building and Sustaining Networks of Dialogue - Locally and Globally

Paul Alexander, Institute on the Common Good, Regis University; Marc-André Franche, United Nations Development Program; Bill Fulton, Colorado Civic Canopy

This session will provide an opportunity to look at two different approaches to building and sustaining networks dedicated to dialogue and democratic practice. We will begin by exploring the key ideas, experiences, challenges and future plans of the Community of Practice on Democratic Dialogue in Latin America. This community brings together two networks: one of like minded institutions and the second of practitioners. The session would highlight three key areas of work of the Community: a) Dialogue typologies and categories; b) Handbook for dialogue practitioners and c) impact assessment of dialogues. We will then look at the Civic Canopy, a Colorado effort to use dialogue as a means of building and sustaining a network of individuals and organizations working to increase civic engagement in Colorado. Participants will reflect on the similarities and distinctions between the approaches, and how they relate to the work in their own communities.

Citizen-Initiated Deliberations on Legislative Public Policy Issues

Les Ihara, Jr., Hawaii State Senate; Bruce Feustel and Peggy Kerns, National Conference of State Legislatures

This session is for those interested in organizing deliberative activities involving state legislators and the issues they face. Legislators and others with experience in citizen-legislator engagement will lead a discussion with participants on involving legislators in their deliberative activities and initiating deliberative forums on legislative issues. The session will also include discussion on practical applications of public policy best practices in legislative bodies, strategies for promoting public deliberation in legislatures, subculture of legislative bodies, and national projects to support citizen engagement with state legislatures and to form a network of state legislators for public deliberation.

Civic Index and Civic Indicators - A Community's Capacity for Change

Gail Hoagland, National Civic League

The Civic Index is a community assessment and self-evaluation tool. The Civic Index assesses what the National Civic League calls "civic infrastructure," or those characteristics that communities possess to effectively solve problems. Civic Indicators is a relatively new concept in the community indicators movement that allows a community to measure and track the civic health of a community over time. These elements are the building blocks of the community's capacity for change and effectively addressing issues. This session will provide an opportunity to learn about these critical elements of community, as well as the application and utilization of these tools to create impactful, long-term change. Participants will gain an understanding of the critical role civic infrastructure plays in community problem solving; be able to identify the basic elements of the Civic Index; learn how to assess the civic health of their own community; and be the first to hear about the exciting field of Civic Indicators and lessons learned to date.

Common Sense to Common Practice: Improving Public Involvement at EPA

Patricia Bonner and Leanne Smith Nurse, US EPA National Center for Environmental Innovation

This session will show how the Environmental Protection Agency is using a series of unique tools to raise awareness about and showcase the value of effective public involvement. These tools support EPA's Public Involvement Policy and reflect the expressed needs of government, business, citizens and non-governmental partners. As the first federal agency with such a policy, EPA's work is of interest to other units of government,

citizens and NGOs. Participants will learn how to “stretch” beyond current public involvement competencies by integrating some new tools/skills in your practice of public/community involvement; how to gain and use the special knowledge of others through several easy-to-use group processes; and how to do more effective networking to find the right help at the right time.

Designing the D&D City

Kenoli Oleari and W. Marc Tognotti, The Global Democracy Institute and San Francisco Neighborhood Assemblies Network

What would a city designed around D&D principles look like? Cities regularly talk about developing physical infrastructure. But how about participatory infrastructure? How can we develop institutions and processes to bring neighborhoods together in regular and ongoing dialogue? We'll talk about how a number of cities are already moving in this direction, creating innovative citizen-participation systems. We'll discuss the work we are doing in San Francisco, legislatively and with communities, to create a citywide network of neighborhood assemblies that are independent from but recognized by city hall, and integrated into city decision-making processes. Participants in the session will be asked to use their knowledge of D&D tools and processes and their collective imagination to design model “neighborhood constitutions” instituting D&D practices into the ongoing routine of community life. Our meeting will use processes borrowed from Future Search and The World Cafe, among others.

From “Choir” Conversations to Meaningful Blue/Red Dialogue

Laura Chasin, Public Conversations Project; Gloria F. Mengual, Study Circles Resource Center; Susan Partnow, Lets Talk America

In this year's political shorthand, how can primarily “blue” NCDD members increase the political diversity, not only of our colleagues, but participants in the conversations we conduct? What challenges have you encountered while attempting to engage colleagues and participants likely to view themselves as more toward “red” than “blue”? How have you successfully addressed these challenges? What do we already know about broadening the political base who reflectively asks, “What do we still need to learn?” This interactive session will ponder “Where to From Here?” in our efforts to make dialogue and deliberation more attractive/accessible to people from across the political spectrum. It also will be an opportunity to share what participants already know about the answers to these questions. Participants will develop several collective maps of: a) the contexts in which people of “redder” political views have been interested in engaging in dialogue; b) the barriers to successful engagement that practitioners have encountered; c) “best practices” in addressing these barriers effectively; and d) possible next steps and how NCDD can support those who take them.

Getting to Millions: Engaging the Public in a National Discussion to Impact Policy

Ashley Boyd, AmericaSpeaks; Amy Malick, Study Circles Resource Center; Jed Miller, Web Lab

We must find new ways to help citizens play a greater role in our nation's policy-making process. In the summer of 2003, 15 leading practitioners of public deliberation came together to develop a proposal for how more than 1 million people could take part in a National Discussion to influence Congress on the issue of health care reform. Among the participants in this strategy session were AmericaSpeaks, Study Circles Resource Center, National Issues Forums, Viewpoint Learning, Web Lab, Information Renaissance, E-thePeople, and several others. This session will present the strategy that emerged from this process. In addition to presenting the strategy, session leaders will facilitate a discussion about how different models may be integrated to impact national policy-making.

Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue: A How-to of Beginning, Sustaining, and Outreach

Elias Botto, Len Traubman, DDS, MSD and Libby Traubman, MSW, Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group

The how-to of Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue will be presented in sound intellectual framework and face-to-face experience, based in on-the-ground experience. Libby and Len Traubman co-founded the 12-year-old Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group on the San Francisco Peninsula. These 30 women and men -- Holocaust survivors and 20th generation Palestinians -- after 147 meetings, continue learning how to change strangers into friends, “enemies” into partners. With face-to-face listening and relationship building, they initiate concrete projects that help people and invigorate the public peace process, here and overseas. Elements of this workshop will include: (1) story as entry to dialogue, (2) the process of social change through dialogue and expanding identification, and (3) beginning, maturing, and growing a dialogue. Participant will be able to return home to initiate and sustain a local dialogue. Printed guidelines and videos will be provided.

Online Dialogue & Deliberation: Lessons Learned & Challenges For the Future

Bob Carlitz, Information Renaissance; Tim Erickson, St. Paul E-Democracy; Joseph Peters, Ascentum Inc.

This session is intended to be an interactive discussion about the field of online dialogue and deliberation. Topics on the agenda include: a look at how online and face-to-face D&D can interact, examining the lessons learned in recent years, and a discussion about the challenges still before us. This discussion will be led by a panel of experts on online D&D, but with a real focus on letting participants share their own thoughts, concerns, and ideas.

Project 540: Youth Dialogues for Community Improvement

Stacie Molnar-Main and Harris J. Sokoloff, University of Pennsylvania and Students of J.P. McCaskey High School

Project 540 is a national school-based initiative to engage high school students in dialogue and reflection leading to civic action. It is unique because it engages students in all aspects of project leadership, from organizing the project to group facilitation to action plan development and implementation. The workshop will introduce participants to the Project 540 dialogue process through experiential activities and interaction with youth who lead the project in their schools and communities. Key learnings will be shared, as well as copies of Project 540 leadership materials.

The Practice of Deliberative Democracy & Its Embeddedness in Communities

Elena Fagotto and Abby Williamson, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

The panelists will present preliminary findings from a research project being conducted at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government on public deliberation. The research project has two components: 1) the mapping of the deliberative democracy field and 2) an analysis of how deliberation impacts communities and may be embedded into how communities address local problems on an on-going basis. The first component examines the range of major models of public deliberation and charts the models based on their distribution, frequency, and strengths and weaknesses to advance the field's understanding of the uses of deliberation. The second component analyzes mature cases of civic deliberation in the U.S. to examine whether and how practices of civic deliberation have become embedded in communities -- in other words, to see if communities that have used public deliberation in certain contexts apply deliberative tools also to other areas of decision making and problem solving.

What Comes After Dialogue and Deliberation? Civic Organizing as a Way to Transform Talk into Tangible and Sustainable Change

Melinda Patrician and Palma Strand, Arlington Forum

Dialogue and deliberation processes focus on creating relationships, enhancing participants'; awareness, or arriving at decisions that draw in a broad range of those affected and concerned. There is often a general hope that these processes will ripple outward and have lasting effects, and participants are often encouraged to view themselves as change agents. A civic organizing approach and civic organizing techniques give people who have participated in dialogue and deliberation processes tools that enable them to intentionally transform their organizations and communities. The proposed session will introduce participants to civic organizing theory and techniques, distinguish civic organizing from other modes of social change (including community organizing), and provide experiential exercises that provide a grounding in basic civic organizing skills.

Speakers Session / Reflective Panel:

Participants began the second day of the gathering with a unique plenary session that combined an expert panel with thoughtful dialogue—both among the panelists and among all attendees. The "Reflective Panel" was designed by Leilani Rashida Henry, our Design Team facilitator, and the idea has since been borrowed by the organizers of the 2005 Canadian Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation. Leilani also moderated the panel.

This plenary session was designed to enable us to tap into and expand upon both expert and community knowledge to address one of the most important issues facing our field. In this interactive session, five prominent and respected leaders in the dialogue and deliberation community led conference participants in a conversation addressing the vital question "How can we have a greater collective impact on the challenging issues of our time?"

Our intentions for the Reflective Panel, in addition to giving conference participants the rare opportunity to hear from

these key leaders in the dialogue and deliberation community, were to:

- Increase our collective understanding of the field as a whole by examining how key proponents of diverse streams of D&D practice think about the impact their work is making
- Provide a space for all of us to reflect on the greater purpose of our own work
- Encourage members of the D&D community to begin thinking about their work—and the work we need to do together—in new ways
- Enable these five leaders to inspire everyone in the room to recommit to their own role as leaders in an emerging field of practice

We were honored to introduce the following five panelists:

Jim Fishkin

James Fishkin is the Janet M. Peck Chair in International Communication at Stanford, where he is also Professor of Political Science and Director of Stanford's Center for Deliberative Democracy. He is the author of *Democracy and Deliberation*, *The Voice of the People* and co-author of *Deliberation Day*. Jim is the creator of Deliberative Polling, a technique which combines deliberation in small groups with scientific random sampling to provide public input for policymakers. He is also a key organizer of "PBS Deliberation Day," an October 16, 2004 project enabling thousands of Americans to reflect, discuss and deliberate on key issues facing the nation.

Glenna Gerard

Glenna Gerard is co-author of *DIALOGUE: Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation* (the first comprehensive work on the subject published in the U.S.) and co-founder of The Dialogue Group. Glenna is a pioneer in the development of the dialogue process, with over 14 years' experience developing the art of applying and facilitating dialogue within a multitude of organizational contexts. Glenna's expertise is designing processes and providing tools that help people make visible the systems within which they work and live so that these same people can make conscious, strategic and effective decisions.

Martha McCoy

As Executive Director of the Study Circles Resource Center and President of the Paul J. Aicher Foundation (formerly the Topsfield Foundation), Martha McCoy provides leadership in developing strategies for grassroots citizen involvement in some of the most critical issues that face communities – racism and race relations, crime and violence, the achievement gap in education, etc. Martha and her staff travel widely to work with local public officials and community coalitions around the country, and to collaborate with national and state-level organizations that are integrating deliberative dialogue into their work.

Harold Saunders

Harold Saunders is the Chairman & President of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue and the Director of International Affairs for the Kettering Foundation. Harold conducts non-official dialogue - a "public peace process" - among those in deep-rooted ethnic, racial or religious conflict. He served in the U.S. government for 25 years; while Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (1978-81), he participated in drafting the Camp David accords and the Egyptian Israeli peace treaty and helped negotiate the release of American hostages in Iran. Harold's most recent book is *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts*.

William Ury

William Ury is co-founder of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, where he directs the Global Negotiation Project. He is co-author of *Getting to YES* and author of *Getting Past No* and *The Third Side*. Bill works with community, government, and business leaders around the world on transforming adversarial relationships into mutually beneficial partnerships. He was actively involved in the creation of nuclear risk reduction centers in Washington and Moscow, serving as a consultant to the Crisis Management Center at the White House. Working with former President Jimmy Carter, he co-founded the International Negotiation Network, which seeks to end civil wars around the world.



Bill Ury addresses the group during the Reflective Panel, while Hal Saunders and Glenna Gerard listen.

Each of these five speakers have done groundbreaking work in their own "stream of D&D practice" (collaborative action, deliberative democracy, organization development, conflict resolution and peace building). We began the session by asking these five leaders to briefly describe and share insights about the impact of their work. After these comments, the panelists used an Inquiry Circle model which required each of them to close their remarks with a question for the next panelist to address during their remarks.

After the round of introductions, Glenna Gerard spoke about a major challenge of our time being simply to be with each other in ways that are respectful, in ways that inspire us, and in ways that honor, rather than in ways that divide us and separate us. She explained that although we all are talking about the same thing, we have different stories that describe our creator, or our leaders. We then mistake our stories for what we are attempting to describe, and we fight over those stories. To Glenna, one of our greatest challenges is to learn how to honor our own stories and others' stories; to learn how to listen to a story that's really different from our own, and to honor it.

Glenna expressed her belief that those of us involved in dialogue and deliberation are "responding to something that is emerging in the world; to a need that is present in the world for us to find different ways to be together. Whether that be to become wiser about our democracy, and how we make decisions, or whether it be to discover new ways to relate across spiritual paths; to acknowledge the fact that we are becoming global. We don't have the luxury of living in separate compartments in the world anymore."

Martha McCoy observed that the panelists seem to be expressing a common theme of creating conditions in which we can be together for some vision of what it means to be human and what it means to share a voice together; what it means to collectively respect and have impact in a way that promotes our health and well-being individually and collectively.

In response to Martha's question, "How will we know we're making progress?," Jim Fishkin listed some things we would need to accomplish and measure if we were to have a more meaningful form of democracy:

- inclusiveness (representing everybody; not leaving voices out)
- a well-informed public (people would shed the mis- and dis-information they are given)
- people learning to listen to opposing points of view instead of only to those they agree with
- creating a social context where people can come to some understanding of what's motivating people who are very different from themselves

Jim admitted that none of our efforts in the dialogue & deliberation community are perfect. He asked Glenna Gerard, "So, what are the precise institutional mechanisms that will serve a genuine, informative public input/public dialogue?"

Although Glenna did not have the answer to this question at the ready, she felt that we have the collective capacity to discover the answer as a field of practice. "I do believe," Glenna stated, "that we are beginning to know more and more about what are the kinds of processes and conditions that can create environments where we collectively can unlock the wisdom to discover what those institutions are."

Turning to Hal Saunders, she asked "I'm curious about what, in our experience, are we learning about how to create the conditions required to open up and inspire us collectively?"

Hal pointed out that if we think we know where we're going, we are just going to close doors. If anyone had him and his colleagues where they would be five years from now, he would have guessed wrong and would eventually have been out of a job because of it. Having faith in the open-ended political process is vital.

Hal then asked Bill Ury, "Is there a way of thinking systematically about how to connect steps, because I think the strategy is not to know where you're going but to make sure the pieces are connected?"

Bill emphasized the importance of examining our own past to recognize the long-range direction society is heading in. He challenged the field to come up with open-ended processes and technologies that actually enable community to be born on this planet, among the different tribes of the earth, that will be strong enough to hold the rapidly-spreading knowledge of how to put an end to this whole experiment. Bill implored participants to re-think the boundaries of our field and put a "G" in the name of the conference so it's the Global Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation. "We're pioneers here; were in the infancy of this, and we need to really extend our boundaries out to encompass the earth itself."

Bill left us with two final, poignant questions: How can we develop/grow the kind of collective wisdom that has to be higher than any kind of individual wisdom that any of us can muster? And how can we develop processes that

crystallize the collective wisdom that's going to be essential if this little experiment on this little forgotten planet in the middle of the universe is going to be sustainable?

Following this thought-provoking discussion, conference participants engaged in dialogue in small groups about what they had just heard. The session concluded with a large-group process that enabled us to hear what people felt were the most important insights about how we can impact the challenging issues of our time, and left many participants inspired to find ways to increase the impact of their own work.

The reflective panel, which was our attempt to enable conference participants to hear from some of the most prominent leaders in the field while still retaining high levels of participation and dialogic quality, was one of the most well-received features of the conference. Participants called it "inspirational and informative" in their evaluations. To one person, the circular process used in the reflective panel was "new to me and a complete revelation." Another commented that it was a "great way of facilitating a panel experience in plenary that avoided long monologues and was more interactive."

Integration Groups:

Each day over lunch, conference participants met with their pre-assigned Integration Groups. The integration groups were designed to help people process what they were learning and experiencing at the conference, and help them identify ways to integrate their learning back into their day-to-day work. Integration groups used the simple Conversation Café process, and were hosted (lightly facilitated) by people who were prepared in advance by the planning team.

At busy conferences that seem to whiz by, it's easy to return to our routines at home without changing or doing anything differently despite everything we learned at the gathering. It can also be difficult to develop lasting relationships with the people you meet, just because of the sheer number of people and goings-on. The integration groups were meant to address these difficulties.

On the first day, integration groups took time for introductions, then shared their personal hopes or goals for the conference. On the second day, the groups talked about what they were learning and experiencing and whether that was supporting their goals. And on the final day, the integration groups discussed how their experiences and learnings at the conference would impact their work back home.

The integration groups were meant to provide an opportunity for participants to experience the connection and community that is possible within a small group and to integrate their learning and experiences throughout the conference. Some conference participants loved their experience in their integration group, and rated them higher than any other element. One participant wrote on their evaluation form that the lunch groups were their favorite element "because it gave me a chance for some critical reflection and connection to others."

Many people, however, felt over-directed; they would have liked to have their lunchtime free to sit with whomever they pleased. The integration groups seemed to add to a feeling that the conference was over-structured—one of the primary weaknesses of the 2004 event identified by participants in the evaluations.

Dinner with Colleagues in Town:

Giving conference participants a free evening on the second night of the conference accomplished several things: it gave participants a much-needed break from the often intense conference atmosphere, allowed them to spend some time in Denver, and provided them with another opportunity for informal networking and relationship-building.

The Logistics Team identified a variety of affordable, quality restaurants in downtown Denver where conference participants could meet for dinner. We posted sign-up sheets in a well-traveled place, and people proposed topics or areas of interest at the restaurant they preferred or signed up for topics proposed by others. Our intent for the evening was that people would self-organize around areas of interest, such as "LGBT dialogue" or "D&D in Southern California."



Katie Howard and Lars Torres enjoy each other's company during a plenary session.

People proposed topics from “dialogue & deliberation research” to “Jewish-Palestinian dialogue,” and many others just went out to dinner with the group they found themselves with after the last workshop, or with colleagues they had pre-arranged to meet with that night. Some participants told us that by the second evening, they just needed a break, and that their group avoided talking about dialogue and deliberation and just had fun getting to know each other.

Conference participants valued the opportunity to network and make personal connections with their peers perhaps more than anything else. As one participant wrote on their evaluation form, “The thing I valued most is the networking and the personal connections made—and ultimately, that’s how you build a ‘community of practice.’”

Playback Theatre:

On the morning of the third and final day of the conference, we began the day with an interactive performance of National Playback Theatre, which turned out to be the most highly-rated and most talked-about feature of the 2004 conference. Playback Theatre is an innovative example of how the arts can foster and enhance dialogue. We utilized this improvisational form of theatre to reflect on our learnings and experiences over the weekend, encourage unresolved conflicts to emerge, and rejuvenate us for the trip home.

Playback Theatre is practiced in hundreds of settings around the world, as both an art form and a means of generating community power and possibility. This improvisational form of communication was developed in 1975 by Jonathan Fox. The National Playback Theater ensemble was founded by Leilani Rashida Henry, also our Design Team facilitator for the conference, to integrate the principles of art, spontaneity, and authenticity to facilitate dialogue and enhance cohesion and transformation within organizations and communities.

National Playback Theater unites improvisational artists from around the United States. Using music, movement, and non-scripted theater, its performances create interactive dialogue and build community. In telling and then seeing their stories and their colleagues’ stories played back to them, people discover or reinforce their common humanity and shared experience. Boundaries and conflicts start to dissolve, trust is built, learning is supported and uncharted terrain becomes safe and exciting.

Actors included Lorenzo Aragon, Cat Callejas, Kevin Gray, Leilani Rashida Henry, Victor Waring, and Deb Witzel. Musician James Hoskins also contributed to the performance.



A snapshot of our Playback actors at work.

Our Playback Theatre session began with music. The actors initiated a rhythm, and then everyone in the room followed suit by clapping or playing percussion instruments that the actors handed out. Lorenzo began the session by telling us that Playback is about creating theatre together. People from the audience share moments and stories from their lives. Participants sit in the “teller’s chair” and the actors use movement, theater, and other forms of expression to “play back” that person’s story.

What happened in the next 90 minutes was magical for many people in the room. Here are a few people’s comments about the session from our satisfaction survey:

- Playback Theater amplified how other-than-discursive communication is healthy and essential for real democracy to take root.
- Playback Theatre certainly was a dynamic way to experience dialogue’s essence—listening, reflecting, hearing yourself in new ways, others hearing you and taking you in, being present and mindful.
- Playback moved me to richer/fuller sorts of understanding.
- It connected me to everyone and very expressive.
- Playback Theater tied my whole NCDD experience together for me and made me realize how powerful and deep our work is.
- National Playback Theatre was a great way to bring us all together and process the difficult stuff.
- National Playback Theatre went beyond words. It captured the power of both hope and despair.
- Playback Theatre expressed what I could not bring myself to say.

People seemed encouraged by Playback, over the course of the session, to share more and more personal and emotional stories with everyone in the room. Themes seemed to emerge. Several times, people talked about recognizing one's own experience in another person's story and feeling heard as the other person's story was heard. Another common theme seemed to be the renewed awareness of the power of movement and other forms of non-verbal expression. A third theme was that participants who had felt stifled before, by themselves or by others, were finally feeling free to express emotion and frustration and to be themselves. And several people expressed that they were starting to feel that we, as a community, are there for each other, and that we are developing the courage to stand for each other.

Lorenzo began by asking people to think about a moment of compassion that they had experienced at the conference. One person spoke of someone offering her a kind of retreat or sanctuary space when she spoke about how distressed she felt by the polarization in the country, and how she had actually considered leaving the country. The troupe played back how she had felt her despair lessen when she was cared for and empathized with.

Another person talked about something that happened during his workshop, after a Jew and a Palestinian shared their stories. A young Palestinian man in the workshop responded to the exchange saying "that was my father's story." His father had died, and his story had never been told. Seeing someone who was like his father being able to share his story brought the young man to tears. He told the group that this instance made him feel connected back to life again. For the workshop facilitator, "it was like helping people experience life, and it was beautiful for me" and this feeling was then played back.

Another participant talked about what happened to him the night before, when some Canadians invited him out to dinner and they happened upon the Diversity Team at a nearby Vietnamese restaurant. The new group was invited in, and they spoke openly and honestly about what it felt like for Canadians, for African Americans, and for other groups to be at this conference and in this country at this rather emotional time.

When the facilitator asked for stories about courageous incidents, an African American stood up and talked about how she had convinced another woman who was struggling around diversity issues at the conference to go in and talk to the Listeners. The woman protested, but our speaker convinced her. When the other woman was expressing herself to the Listeners, and the Listeners were leaning in towards her, saying "Yes...How can we help?" her heart "just grew. I was moved by her courage."

Lorenzo asked the group to think about a moment during the conference when they saw "spirit" spark or come alive. One participant, Nancy Glock-Grueneich, called out "Right now!" and then she explained,

We talk, and we try in our talking and in our listening to express what's in our hearts and to welcome each other in doing that, and to struggle through all the scary parts and conflict. And we keep trying to walk our talk and finding we're not, and struggling with each other, saying 'we all talk about dialogue and we don't know how to do it' and 'we're not doing it right' and 'we're so human' and getting really upset with each other, and then *you* come along and you're able to bring out such clarity of those feelings, and honor them, and make them really alright for us to have. And we've talked about seeing the beauty in them, but what you're doing is allowing us to really feel the beauty of each other's feelings, and not be afraid of it.

Another participant spoke about feeling a sense of spirit during a workshop on dance and movement. She was amazed at how we could easily use our bodies instead of words to express ourselves collectively and individually.

After the actors introduced themselves (and their introductions, which described how they were feeling at the time—inspired, supported, thirsty—were played out), conference participants were asked to turn to each other to share a story from the conference. After they had time to briefly share with each other, one of the actors, Leilani Henry, asked for a young leader, a new practitioner, to come up and share their story.

An undergraduate student then shared a story from a workshop he had attended the previous day about scaling dialogue up to impact national and international issues. From the back of the room, "a bomb was dropped on the group": someone from the back of the room interrupted the ambitious, excited conversation to challenge the group. "Prove to me that dialogue and deliberation are working," he called, and everybody went silent. People were uncomfortable, and the young man broke the silence by acknowledging that the statement was coming from a place of love for this work, and that it's important for us to ground ourselves in solid practice and solid theory. The American public is so cynical about democracy and about what's possible that if we are to go to scale, and show that we're creating change, people need to see it as a useful activity or it can make things worse. His sense of transforming an uncomfortable moment into a grounding one was then played back.

The most powerful story—and most powerful playback—was that of an Muslim woman. “I’m an American Muslim,” she began, “and I’ve walked around since 9/11 as two people, torn. I’m an American, and a Muslim, and supposedly Islam and America are at war, and my faith has been hijacked.” Courageously, she expressed to the group how afraid she was, and that she felt her fear of being mistreated in this country was justified.

“The happy conclusion,” she said, “is that I met all of you, and the energy and spirit I feel here gives me enormous hope and inspiration, and I want to thank you all, for all of the work you’re doing. Thank you.”

This Playback Theatre performance has since inspired similar performances at both the Study Circles Resource Center’s national conference and the Canadian Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation.

Modified Open Space:

Following the energizing Playback Theatre performance, Lisa Heft expertly facilitated a two-hour modified Open Space Technology session. Conference participants were invited to propose a dialogue, discussion, or workshop on any topic they felt still needed to be addressed. We encouraged participants to use this time to initiate action groups, resolve conflicts, present new D&D models, or address key issues facing our community. This session provided all conference attendees with the opportunity to ensure their needs for learning, for closure, for action, and for networking were met on this last day of the conference.

Open Space starts with a circle of chairs. Participants create their own agenda by identifying issues and topics for which they have passion and interest and for which they are willing to host discussion groups. Participants move from group to group whenever they feel that they can no longer learn or contribute to a discussion, or when they feel drawn to another topic. The cross-pollination from discussion to discussion and topic to topic in a non-linear way allows participants to jump quickly from familiar ways of thinking into innovation and action. Open Space Technology, created by Harrison Owen, can be utilized by groups of 5 to over 2000.

How can such a process be productive without a pre-designed agenda or outcome and little or no intervention by a facilitator? Won’t that create chaos? Won’t chaos lead to catastrophe? Where is the structure? Actually there is very specific structure to the Open Space process - just not the structure people usually create for meetings. The result is a new way of working, thinking and communicating, and the results can be innovative, concrete, positive, and substantial. Open Space has been used as the format for conferences, strategic planning, retreats and conflict resolution. It has also been used for intergroup understanding, community development and peacebuilding in small towns and villages, schools, hospitals, churches and more in over 90 countries.

Conference participants initiated dozens of different topics, including:

- Applying Critical Race Theory to Dialogue & Deliberation
- Arnie Mindell / Process Work / isms
- Blood Flow for Brain Flow (movement and dance)
- Canadian Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation
- Community Mediation & Public Dialogue – Potential Partners
- Dialogue in the African Great Lakes Area
- Diversity Arts
- Episcopal Church – Anglican Communion – Supporting Its Vitality
- Global HIV/AIDS (A Closer Walk film)
- Leadership in Organizations
- Letting the Guard Down: Allowing ourselves to talk about where we struggle with living our values
- Let’s Talk America
- Making the Margins the Middle
- National Project on D&D-Friendly Legislatures
- Non-English-Speaking Dialogue Practice
- PeaceTrain
- Political Polarization & the Future
- Race Relations / Slave-Holding History (Traces of the Trade film)

- Republicans and D&D
- Revitalizing Our Democracy – Connect D&D Process and the Voter to Get Truth & Trust in Election Campaigns
- Still Feeling Marginalized (Diversity Issues at NCDD 2004)
- Strategies for Connecting Public Officials and D&D
- Students / Young People / New Practitioners
- Study Circles
- Systems and Networks of Sustained Dialogue & Deliberation
- Taking Dialogue to the Next Level – A Citizen’s UN
- The Art of Convening - Transformative Meetings & Conversations
- The Dark Side of Dialogue: Questions from Freud, Marx, Foucault and Habermas (even Jung)
- The Grief of Being an American in Today’s World
- Using D&D for Conflict Prevention in African Great Lakes Region
- What to do to Take Care of Myself After the Election?
- Working Through Discomfort

The Open Space session was rated highly, and many participants chose to continue meeting in their Open Space topic over lunch. Energy was high during the Open Space plenary, and more time will be allotted if we choose to have another Open Space session at a future NCDD conference.

The Closing Session:

Miki Kashtan facilitated the conference’s simple, powerful closing session. We asked participants to think about what they are leaving the conference with, and what they would like to share with others before they leave. One by one, participants spoke into a microphone, and others sat down when they heard their own comment spoken by someone else. Here are some of the things participants shared:

- We are a community learning to be a learning community.
- We are on the cutting edge of this stuff; such babies in this, and there is such power in being in that baby stage and it’s awesome to be at this birth.
- I want to challenge the D&D community to think more about identity, social justice and diversity.
- I’m grateful for the opportunity to exercise both my head and my heart.
- I’m reminded that although we all may have common goals of humanity and equity, that’s not enough. A sense of trust doesn’t instantly form because we have common goals.
- I’m excited about this conference and the way it turned out. Community is understanding how much we don’t understand; how many worldviews there are and how many we need to become a greater community.
- I thought I’d come here and get answers, and I have a lot more questions than I have answers. But I am very inspired and very touched by what’s possible in this room.
- Our strength as a community will be in how deeply we can connect, stay connected and are willing to connect with one another.
- I’m grateful for the heartfelt connections that have been made intentionally and unintentionally at this conference.
- I’m leaving with a sense of the diversity, intention and intelligence being collected about dialogue and what it is and what it isn’t. Because of this community, it’s really being fastened down on the planet.

National Issues Forum on Americans’ Role in the World:

The conference closed at 3:30, but we decided to offer an evening activity for those staying on for post-conference trainings and those from the local area. From 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., members of the National Issues Forums network hosted a deliberative forum on Americans’ role in the world. Dolores Foley of the University of Hawaii and Taylor Willingham of Texas Forums organized and hosted the forum.

National Issues Forums (NIF) is an independent network of civic and educational groups which use “issue books” as a basis for deliberative choice work in forums based on the town meeting tradition. NIF issue books use research

on the public's concerns to identify three or four options or approaches to an issue (there are never just two polar alternatives). Presenting issues in this way invites citizens to confront the conflicts among different options and avoids the usual debates in which people lash out with simplistic arguments. The term "National Issues Forums" is used to refer to both a network of organizations and a deliberative process.

The NIF process helps people to use "choice work" to see issues from different points of view and move toward shared, stable, well-informed public judgments based on what is valuable to them about important issues. Through deliberation, participants move from making individual choices to making choices as a public.

The evening's discussions focused on four different perspectives people have about Americans' Role in the World. Each approach reflected a distinctive perspective on what our global priorities should be and what costs and tradeoffs we should be prepared to accept if we move in that direction.

No one approach is the perfect solution, nor are the approaches mutually exclusive. They do, however, frame the discussion in such a way that we can talk about the costs and consequences of each perspective. What criteria will we use to govern our actions as a nation and as citizens operating in an increasingly interconnected world? What kind of world do we want to create for our children and grandchildren? What needs to happen for us to move in that direction?

The evening was a success, with over 60 people attending. Participants had the opportunity to experience a leading deliberative technique while enriching their thinking about this important issue.

Post-Conference Trainings:

In collaboration with leaders in the dialogue & deliberation community, we offered ten excellent post-conference trainings the day after the three-day conference. The post-conference trainings provided nearly 100 conference participants (and others from the area) with additional opportunities for in-depth exploration and skill-building, and opportunities to be trained by some of the key leaders in the field.

The ten post-conference trainings were:

Organizing and Moderating Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts in Communities, Corporations and Campuses

Facilitated by Harold H. Saunders, President of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue and Priya N. Parker, Coordinator of the Sustained Dialogue Campus Project. Saunders is also Director of International Affairs at the Kettering Foundation.

Participants learned enough about the five-stage process of Sustained Dialogue to (a) decide whether it would be useful to them and (b) begin forming dialogue groups. Sustained Dialogue (SD) is a systematic, interactive, open-ended political process to transform conflictual relationships over time. SD focuses on the dynamics of the relationships that underlie conflict and block its resolution. It is a conceptualization of two decades of experience with protracted dialogues among citizens outside government in conflicts—whether for racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, or historical causes.

Convening and Moderating National Issues Forums

Facilitated by Senator Les Ihara, Hawaii State Legislator, Taylor Willingham, Director of Texas Forums and Research Associate for the Kettering Foundation and Dolores Foley, Associate Professor at the University of Hawaii.

Civil discourse is vital to the health of a democratic society and sound public policy. This workshop introduced participants to the tools, methods and theory of deliberative forums developed as part of the research agenda of the Kettering Foundation and supported by the National Issues Forums Institute. The deliberative forums have been used in communities across the country to tackle national issues as part of a national dialogue and to address locally-framed issues. Participants experienced a deliberative forum, discussed how issues are framed for deliberative discourse, and learned how to tap into the National Issues Forums network to convene deliberative forums in their communities.



Priya Parker co-facilitated a popular post-conference training on Sustained Dialogue with Harold Saunders.

Addressing the Campus Climate for Diversity: Promoting Positive Intergroup Relations using Structured Intergroup Interaction Initiatives

Facilitated by the University of Denver's Jesús Treviño, Ph.D., Associate Provost for Multicultural Affairs, Lamont Sellers, Assistant Director, Center for Multicultural Affairs, and Niki Latino, Multicultural Student Academic Advisor.

The purpose of this workshop was to present a comprehensive model for promoting positive intergroup relations on college campuses using structured intergroup interaction initiatives. The case of the Center for Multicultural Excellence at the University of Denver was presented in addition to the programs and activities that bring students, staff, and faculty together for dialogue around issues of diversity. Participants enjoyed an opportunity to learn about developing and administering structured intergroup interaction initiatives including intergroup dialogues, intergroup relations retreats, and intergroup training workshops. This will be a hands-on and interactive workshop.

Planning, Facilitating, and Evaluating a City-wide Public Dialogue Process

Facilitated by Kimberly Pearce and Barnett Pearce, Founding members of the Public Dialogue Consortium. Kim Pearce is also a Professor in the Department of Speech Communication at De Anza College; Barnett Pearce is also a Professor in the School of Human and Organization Development at Fielding Graduate Institute.

The Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) seeks to engage the public and government officials in patterns of public communication about important issues that have the desirable qualities of dialogue. To do so, the PDC works collaboratively with government and members of the public to design multi-event processes, to develop innovative meetings, and to employ unusual forms of communication. In this session, participants looked at 1) the distinctive features of the Public Dialogue Consortium's ways of working; 2) lessons learned about the prospects for and challenges of public dialogue processes; and 3) questions raised by our experience. Participants were invited to review and assess an 18-month public dialogue process in a small California city as a way of identifying skills and strategies and posing relevant questions.

Dialogue to Reconciliation Using Nonviolent Communication

Facilitated by Miki Kashtan, Co-Founder of BayNVC (Bay Area Nonviolent Communication) and Social Change Project Coordinator for CNVC, the Center for Nonviolent Communication.

Nonviolent communication (NVC) is a language and consciousness of compassion that can dramatically improve all of our relationships, from personal to professional. Participants spent the day learning the tools of nonviolent communication for peaceful resolution to conflicts, including how to connect from the heart with people whose views or actions are painfully different from our own, and working with situations where power between conflicting parties is seen as unequal.

Experiencing Bohmian Dialogue

Facilitated by Lee Nichol, Editor of *On Dialogue* by David Bohm (1996), and Ray Seigfried, Senior Vice President of Christiana Care Health System.

Participants were given the opportunity to participate with others in experiencing the meaning of a Bohmian Dialogue. Participants were encouraged to participate in the Bohm Dialogue session led by Nichol and Seigfried during the conference. Participants experienced what it means to explore the movement of consciousness, the limitations of reflexive assumptions and the thought process.

An Introduction to Dynamic Facilitation, Choice-creating, and the Wisdom Council

Facilitated by Jim Rough, with Jean Rough, Co-Founders of the Center for Wise Democratic Processes.

Dynamic Facilitation is an energy-based way of facilitating where people address difficult issues creatively and collaboratively, achieving insights and changes of heart. It elicits a way of talking and thinking, choice-creating, that is like dialogue, except that with it people reach thoughtful conclusions. The Wisdom Council is a newly invented way of structuring a choice-creating conversation within a large system of people, with the potential of forming a unanimous, powerful "We the People." Participants explored the theory of how Dynamic Facilitation works and how it elicits "choice-creating" as a quality of thinking. Participants experienced "choice-creating" and distinguished it from dialogue and deliberation, and learned how the Wisdom Council might transform a large organization.

Inquiry as Intervention

Facilitated by Corky Becker, Founding Associate, Public Conversations Project.

Everything a third party does in an intervention has an effect. Inquiry via the act of asking questions influences people. It both encourages and discourages different types of responses, and it requires participants to re-evaluate their situation and their responses to each other in a particular way. Participants in this workshop focused on the power of crafting, asking, and responding to questions. They also evaluated the potential for questions in their own practice. Throughout the day, participants experienced the power of deliberately crafting and responding to questions; practiced crafting different types of questions to elicit thoughtful responses; and examined the shaping power of language and conversational structure on relationships and the trajectory of conflict.

Deliberating Public Issues Online: Using Democracy Lab in Your Classes and for Student Civic Leadership Team Development

Facilitated by Jim Knauer, Director of Democracy Lab and the Pennsylvania Center for Civic Life.

Democracy Lab provides online forums for use in high school and college classes. National Issues Forum-style forums run for 10 weeks, fall and spring. Students from around the country dialogue in small groups and are guided from dialogue to inquiry and to action. Instructors adopt Democracy Lab and students purchase online access for \$25. Democracy Lab also provides online mentoring for student civic leadership teams with some members going on to become online interns serving on our student staff. In this workshop, participants gained an understanding of the pedagogy of deliberative learning and its relationship to classroom learning and student intellectual and civic development.

Now What? What Was Learned and What NCDD is Doing About It

We learned a great deal from the 2004 conference and the work that led up to it. NCDD has taken the lead in converging the various streams that are finding their home in this nascent field of practice, but with this convergence comes growing pains, unexpected needs, and complicated challenges. Below I'll outline some of the challenges that emerged as themes at the 2004 gathering, and how NCDD is or hopes to address each of these challenges.

There is great need for local/regional gatherings and networks:

Conference participants felt strongly that they and others involved in dialogue & deliberation need ways to collaborate, network, and support each other locally. The practitioners, scholars, students, and activists at the 2004 conference expressed a strong interest in seeing NCDD develop regional networks.

Practitioners want to be able to access colleagues in their area for support, knowledge-sharing, and encouragement, and they want to be able to easily connect with others near them on collaborative projects.

NCDD is doing what we can to help get regional networks and gatherings started up. We hope to obtain funding to do much more, but here are the things we have been doing so far:

- We have encouraged NCDD members to take leadership roles in establishing D&D networks in their areas.
- We have assisted those members who have taken such initiative by sharing contacts in our database with them, providing meeting-planning advice, providing them with listservs and other interactive features at our website, publicizing their efforts, and providing resources for the occasion. We have helped ongoing networks form in Northern California and Colorado.
- We are working with Najeeba Syeed-Miller, Executive Director of the Western Justice Center Foundation, to organize a Southern California dialogue and deliberation training event focused on creating a strong network in the region. We plan to provide funding for administrative help and use this opportunity to learn what really works when planning a local gathering and launching a local network.
- We often share segments of our 7000-entry database with people and groups who are initiating networks or seeking to collaborate with others in their area.
- We launched a searchable members database on the NCDD website that enables members and visitors to search by state and country in order to locate others they can connect with in their area.

- We have been exploring with other networking organizations including the Victim Offender Mediation Association (VOMA) and PeaceWeb the possibility of launching a prototype network in a region where we all have a significant number of members.

Much more needs to be done, including instituting ways to provide ongoing support and encouragement to those initiating networks in their area.

Many people are just entering this field and need oriented:

While many of us are still getting used to thinking of this loosely connected set of practices, processes, and practitioners as a field, others are jumping right in, expecting their "elders" to have paved the way for them bit.

Thanks in large part to the \$10,000 grant for youth scholarships from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, we were blessed with a significant number of conference participants who considered themselves to be "newbies" in dialogue and deliberation work. We learned from these new practitioners that people entering into this field are in great need of established structures to help them enter into and succeed in this work.

The young people and other new practitioners at the conference talked about this issue throughout the conference and met during the Open Space plenary to gain further clarity about what those new to dialogue and deliberation need, and what the D&D community can do to meet those needs. Here are some of the things we learned:

- People who are new to this work need access to those who are more experienced and can help them make wise decisions.
- New practitioners need opportunities to gain experience as well as knowledge. They are often caught in the age-old quandary of not being able to gain experience without having a job in the field, and not being able to get a job in the field without having substantial experience.
- New practitioners need information and resources that are tailored to beginners. Navigating this broad field can be a bewildering experience, and new practitioners need more direction than is currently available to them.

Since the conference, NCDD has begun addressing these needs in several different ways, largely due to the continued efforts of some of the young people who attended the conference.

New Practitioners Discussion List

Immediately after the conference, NCDD created a listserv (email discussion list) for new practitioners, and dozens of people subscribed immediately. Subscribers use the listserv to share job postings and resources of interest to those beginning their careers in dialogue and deliberation. We also encourage subscribers to network with one another and to advise NCDD on how we can better meet the needs of new practitioners.

New Practitioners Practicum Project

One of the strategies NCDD is exploring in order to meet the needs of young people and others who are entering the growing dialogue and deliberation field is a "New Practitioners Practicum Project." This project would help match new practitioners to established organizations and practitioners who can use their help. Similar to internships, practicums would be structured to ensure that new practitioners maximize this learning opportunity while helping host organizations to meet their goals. One of NCDD's roles would be to ensure that practitioners' and organizations' learnings would be made available to the entire field.

Evan Thomas Paul, a student at the University of Missouri at the time of the 2004 conference and now an employee of AmericaSpeaks, has been spearheading this project. Evan administered an online survey to determine the level of NCDD members' interest in a practicum project for new practitioners, and the results are informing grant applications that may fund the program.

Mentorship Program

Participants at the 2004 NCDD conference identified the need to create a more systematic approach to attract and retain new practitioners in this rapidly growing field. They identified a number of obstacles to penetrating the field, including the lack of resources to identify, support, and connect new people interested in pursuing a career in dialogue and deliberation to those who can help them get started successfully. To make sure the dialogue and deliberation field is sustainable, we need to find ways to attract, nurture, and train more young people and others who are new to this field.

NCDD's mentorship program, which is being spearheaded by Priya Parker, Program Director of the Sustained Dialogue Campus Network, will help new D&D practitioners along their career path by creating an opportunity for them to develop a professional relationship with an experienced D&D professional. Priya's strong relationship with her mentor, Harold Saunders, Director of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue, inspires her to help other new practitioners find mentors.

Priya is currently developing a needs assessment for members of the dialogue and deliberation community to determine whether and how an ongoing mentorship program would be beneficial to both mentors and mentees.

We need to handle issues of inclusion more openly and effectively:

One of the sub-groups of the 2004 conference Planning Team was the Diversity Team. Participants at NCDD's first conference in 2002 strongly recommended that we establish ways for participants to discuss diversity issues that emerge at the next conference, and the Diversity Team designed three processes to do just that. The processes, which emphasized informal opportunities for participants to express what they were feeling and experiencing but also provided opportunities for formal conflict resolution, were meant to foster dialogue and exchange about issues of diversity and related concerns. It was our hope that these processes would make the conference a safer space for members of marginalized groups.

We offered an art/expression board that allowed people to express themselves creatively about issues of inclusion. We also had facilitators available throughout the gathering for any group of two or more who felt the need to engage in dialogue or a more formal mediation process. But by far our most well-used process was our "Listeners Station." Trained Listeners were posted in a well-traveled location at all times during the gathering, and conference participants were encouraged to share with the Listeners any concerns they had regarding diversity or related topics, or just to stop by to talk about how they were feeling during the conference.

Listeners shared some participants' concerns with the planning team, but mostly they simply provided an outlet for people to share what was going on for them. Listeners heard about a number of isolated instances of insensitivity or misunderstanding involving specific individuals, and in addition to lending an empathetic ear they reminded participants that facilitators were available to them if they wished to engage the other party in dialogue or mediation.

When people approached the Listeners with more general concerns, the planning team was able to respond more actively to the information gleaned at the Listeners Station. At one point during the conference, for example, several participants who considered themselves to be politically conservative approached the Listeners about feeling marginalized at the conference because many other participants seemed to assume everyone around them was progressive. We addressed the concerns of these conference participants by reminding people during a plenary session that not everyone at the conference is progressive, and that jokes at the expense of conservatives are inappropriate. We heard later from these and other conservatives that the conference climate improved significantly for them after this issue was acknowledged in the general session.

It is natural that more concerns and issues are brought to the surface when an environment is created in which people feel safe speaking up, but some participants felt that diversity issues were overly emphasized at the conference, both by a small number of vocal participants and by the programs implemented by the Diversity Team. While some participants felt that "isms were everywhere" (racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, etc.) and were not being addressed effectively, others did not witness or experience any diversity-related problems directly and suspected that people were overreacting or pursuing a personal agenda.

Planning Team members felt they had designed a conference that allows for participants to bring up (during Playback Theatre) and take action on (during Open Space) whatever issues, conflicts, concerns, and needs remained for them by the last day of the conference—and throughout the conference in the Integration Groups and through the Diversity Team's processes. We learned at the gathering, however, that people want the opportunity to voice concerns, desires, and learnings throughout the conference, and to be heard by the entire group.



The bottom line is that many issues of difference emerged at the 2004 NCDD conference, and not all were sufficiently addressed. In order to learn how to more effectively address issues of marginalization and inclusion at our next conference and organizationally, NCDD's director and a group of concerned conference participants and Diversity Team members began exploring these issues at the conference and during subsequent phone meetings. The group has since developed a set of concrete ideas and suggestions for the 2006 conference, and continues to meet in order to further explore these vital issues.

As part of our strategic planning process, NCDD is also working on developing a clear diversity policy to provide our Board and staff with direction in this important area. And as one participant said in her evaluation form, "It's great that these tensions surfaced, since they will bring us closer together the next time."

We need to develop ways to bring these processes to decision-makers:

The second National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation was held just days before the 2004 presidential election, and politics and partisanship were at the front of conference participants minds.

Dialogue and deliberation are all about bringing ordinary people's voices and values back into the decision-making process, no matter who is in power, but many participants feared that if their candidate was not elected, decisions would be made with no consideration given to common ground and common values.

The conference was held during a time when division and partisanship seemed to be at all-time highs, and despite emphasizing efforts to unite citizens with different political ideologies—like Let's Talk America and By the People—at the conference, participants had more faith that dialogue and deliberation *could* influence decision-making beyond the local level than that dialogue and deliberation *would* influence decision-making beyond the local level.

Given this context, participants at the 2004 conference emphasized the need to bring these processes to decision-makers at all levels. Our speakers emphasized this need during the Reflective Panel, workshop presenters emphasized this need during their sessions, and participants emphasized this need during the World Café and Open Space.

Admittedly, NCDD has not been very proactive in this area—yet. We were recently honored to add Leanne Nurse, program analyst at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to NCDD's Board of Directors, and we have worked with Hawaii State Senator Les Ihara to consider various ways that NCDD can connect more effectively with legislators. In November 2005, NCDD was invited to send a representative to speak to local elected officials at a Local Government Academy conference in Pittsburgh about dialogue and deliberation methods, and Leanne Nurse agreed to speak to the group.

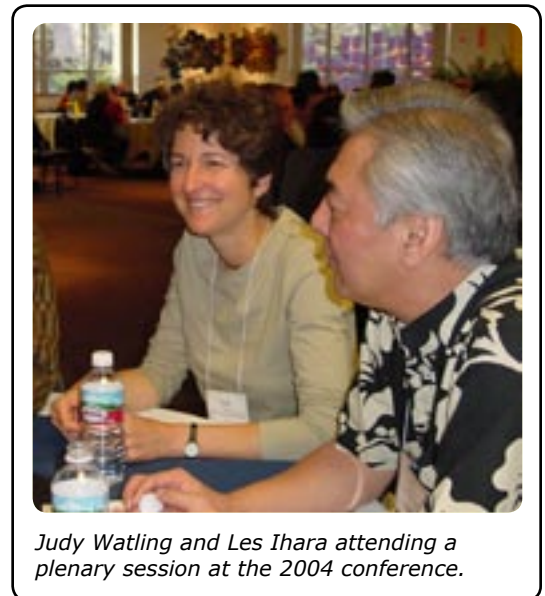
We hope to recruit more elected officials to our 2006 gathering, and we also plan to be actively involved in the Deliberative Democracy Consortium's efforts to bring an international group of elected officials together to initiate a network of decision-makers who are committed to deliberative democracy.

We need to develop quality practitioner tools for common challenges:

Practitioners are in need of high-quality tools and in-depth information on common challenges such as:

- how to evaluation programs
- how to decide when to use which D&D process
- how to frame issues
- how to work with the media
- when and how to connect dialogue and deliberation to the arts
- how to connect dialogue and deliberation to action

We heard about the need for such tools at the 2004 conference, in our 2005 membership survey, and in the conference needs assessment, and we have been working on several exciting projects to help meet these vital needs.



Judy Watling and Les Ihara attending a plenary session at the 2004 conference.

Resources to Help People Match Contexts to Processes

Navigating the broad range of approaches available to them can be an extremely daunting task for those new—and those not-so-new—to dialogue and deliberation. Too often we hear about people using the first method they learn about when their community or organization really needed a different type of process.

Making distinctions between established models is a risky undertaking that NCDD has avoided in the past. We have always been sensitive to the fact that processes are best described by their creators, and they can often be adapted for different circumstances. But the need in this field for clearer distinctions between processes has become too great to ignore. As Hal Saunders humbly stated during the Reflective Panel,

I think we're all doing things that are slightly different because we're different human beings; we've had different experiences, *and* we live in different circumstances. And the important thing for us to realize in this room is "what is the difference?"—not to say "mine's better than yours," but "what is the difference?" "What is the best process for this circumstance?" And maybe Martha has it in one case; maybe David Mathews at Kettering has it; maybe Jim Fishkin or Bill Ury; maybe I don't have it. I'm prepared to recognize that.

NCDD is developing two resources we hope will help people make better design choices. Both resources are meant to introduce people to the range of possibilities out there and to send them in a better direction than they may have gone otherwise.

The first resource is a series of two "diagnostic charts" that categorize the dialogue and deliberation field into four streams based on purpose. A group interested in organizing a dialogue or deliberation program may intend to resolve a specific conflict, to influence policy, to empower community members to take steps to solve a problem, to encourage healing after a crime or crisis, or to simply increase awareness of an issue.

NCDD has worked collaboratively with a number of leaders in the field to identify the four streams: Exploration, Conflict Transformation, Decision-Making, and Collaborative Action. The charts, which we have presented at conferences with glowing results, explain the reasons each stream is used, what issues they are most effective in addressing, and which well-known dialogue and deliberation models focus on each stream. The charts also provide much-appreciated details about each of the methods, such as size of group and how participants are selected.

The following table provides a taste of the first chart.

Dialogue & Deliberation Stream	Intention/Purpose	Some Appropriate D&D Processes
Exploration	To encourage people and groups to learn more about themselves, their community, or an issue, and possibly discover innovative solutions	Bohmian Dialogue, World Café, Conversation Café, Council process, Open Space
Conflict Transformation	To resolve conflicts, to foster personal healing and growth, and to improve relations among groups	Sustained Dialogue, Victim-Offender Mediation, Public Conversations Project dialogues, Web Lab's Small Group Dialogue
Decision-Making	To influence decisions and policy, and to improve public knowledge	National Issues Forums, Citizens Juries, Deliberative Polling, 21st Century Town Meeting, Citizen Choicework, Consensus Conference
Collaborative Action	To empower people and groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution.	Study Circles, Future Search, Appreciative Inquiry

In addition to these charts—which despite being works-in-progress, more and more members of the dialogue and deliberation community are presenting at workshops and including in various publications—NCDD is also developing a “Beginner’s Toolkit to Dialogue & Deliberation.”

NCDD Steering Committee member Nancy Glock-Grueneich is developing the toolkit, which is based on the four streams above. The toolkit will be a small, eye-catching handbook that we will print en masse and distribute widely to people outside of the dialogue and deliberation community. The toolkit will help citizen groups, nonprofits, public officials, and others who are new to these processes decide whether they should run a dialogue or deliberation program and, if so, which of the leading models or techniques best meet their needs and how they should proceed.

The National Dialogue Bureau

There is a startling deficit of the informed views of ordinary Americans in mainstream news coverage of current events. Instead, the nation is fed a constant stream of “expert” views, which often have little to do with how people experience issues in their day-to-day lives. To provide reporters with access to the informed views of ordinary citizens, and to promote dialogue and deliberation, NCDD members are developing a “National Dialogue Bureau.”

NCDD’s National Dialogue Bureau will consist of a network of leaders of dialogue and deliberation groups who are willing to speak with the media about the key findings and concerns of their groups and, if appropriate, to connect journalists with dialogue participants. By providing mainstream news outlets with easy access to the informed citizen perspective on current, contentious issues, the Dialogue Bureau will deepen media coverage of an issue while providing practitioners—and dialogue and deliberation in general—with increased publicity.

Lars Hasselblad Torres, Researcher for AmericaSpeaks, has been spearheading this project, and Karla Andreu was hired to conduct interviews and research in order to determine the feasibility of a National Dialogue Bureau and what would be needed to make such a Bureau a success.

The Learning Exchange

The Learning Exchange will be a dynamic space on NCDD’s website that will house a rich variety of resources and works focused on dialogue and deliberation. In addition to incorporating the large number of resources already featured in thataway.org’s Resources Section, the Learning Exchange will be a repository for scholarly resources (research results, articles, summaries of dissertations) as well as practitioner-oriented resources such as case studies, reports on best practices, summaries of projects, etc.

In an email to NCDD’s Convenor about a document he would like to post on the Learning Exchange, NCDD member Michael Briand, a research associate for the Kettering Foundation, noted that “few scholars know much about the work of practitioners, and few of the latter know much about the work of the former. This ‘gap’ serves neither group well, and as a result the entire field loses.” By enabling NCDD members and others to easily share their research and writings with one another, The Learning Exchange will provide an ongoing means for practitioners to become and remain informed about the latest theory, and for researchers to keep updated on what practitioners are learning and experiencing in the field.

The Learning Exchange will not only provide a vast amount of information in an organized, easy-to-navigate manner, it will also provide users with the means to easily submit new content and enable NCDD staff to more effectively and efficiently update the site’s resources. The NCDD website will become an even more up-to-date, comprehensive source of tips, tools and research on dialogue and deliberation.

Dialogue & the Arts Project

In partnership with Americans for the Arts’ Animating Democracy Initiative, NCDD is developing a web feature that will help members of the dialogue & deliberation community strengthen their work by linking it to the arts. The feature will include descriptions of successful arts-based civic dialogue projects and links to artists who can work with D&D practitioners to bring the arts into their projects. This project has its roots in the Connecting to the Arts group that formed at NCDD’s 2002 conference. Leah Lamb, Artistic Director of The Performance Initiative, is the Dialogue & the Arts Project Manager.

We need to expand our focus from National to Global:

Even at the first National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation, people urged us to replace the word “National” with “International.” In 2002 we decided it was best to establish ourselves in the U.S. before claiming to be an international organization. Although we are a U.S.-based organization that holds a biennial *national* conference, our conferences attract people from outside of the U.S., and does our Coalition. The National *Coalition* for Dialogue & Deliberation now has nearly 100 members (out of 500) from outside of the United States, and we represent nearly 30 countries.

Our first conference inspired Miriam Wyman and Sandra Zagon to organize a Canadian Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation, which attracted 300 people to Ottawa in October 2005. Organizers of the Canadian Conference plan to launch an ongoing Canadian Coalition as well. NCDD provided advice, communication templates, and publicity to the Canadian effort, and we are now doing the same for the African Coalition that formed at the Canadian gathering.

Many conference participants feel that we should add a stronger global dimension to the conferences, and to the network. They would like to see more global issues addressed at the conferences, more non U.S.-solutions featured, and more international participants in attendance.

NCDD’s reach does go beyond the borders of the United States. We have international members and international participants at our conferences, we inspire and support Coalitions for Dialogue & Deliberation initiated in other countries, we connect people internationally, and we connect people with resources that are non U.S.-based.

We hope to focus on global issues and highlight international successes more at the 2006 conference, and we plan to more actively recruit participants from outside of the U.S. We hope to find funding to support some of the travel costs of international participants at our next conference.

What Else Needs to be Done?

After tabulating and analyzing the results of the Conference Satisfaction Survey, the Assessment Team, led by Miriam Wyman, felt that the 2004 NCDD conference was highly successful. Participants valued the opportunity to come together, to learn, to take their place as part of a developing field, and to recognize the importance of dialogue and deliberation in addressing important current issues.

More than anything, conference participants valued the opportunity to network and develop relationships with others in the field. They appreciated the opportunity to learn about a wide array of dialogue and deliberation methods and experience a number of them first-hand, and to struggle through our internal and external challenges. They appreciated the transparency and commitment of the planning team, and valued all of the opportunities they had to share their own work and perspectives at the conference.

Despite all of the projects NCDD is spearheading and all of the great work being done by other organizations, much more needs to be done to strengthen this growing field. We need to find ways, through evaluation, reporting, and data-collecting, to prove that dialogue and deliberation work. Without such proof, how can we expect decision-makers, community leaders, and funders to take chances with these processes?

We also need to do much more multi-process experimentation. No one dialogue or deliberation process has all of the answers, or works in every circumstance. Many issues require intervention at various levels—national or international as well as local, online as well as face-to-face—and we need to get better at working together and combining methods.

We need to continue to develop new tools, and to gather existing tools and make them widely available to people who are practicing and researching this work. We need to articulate a common vision for this field that allows people who are new to these practices to understand and be open to the work. And we need to find more and more ways to encourage practitioners and scholars to develop ongoing relationships, learn from each other, and work together.

We are challenged to really start walking our talk. As Glenna Gerard explained in the Reflective Panel at the conference,

For me, it’s about how do we create that space between us of listening and honor and respect? How do we build our internal capacity to be able to be present with people in that way? And how do we also, then, as people who are seeking to create those environments for others, how do we begin to learn more about how we create those environments externally as well as internally that allow for openings for other possibilities to emerge?

How can we encourage, in our own field, honest analysis of one's own and others' work, genuine collaboration for the benefit of the community, and open access to knowledge and information? How can we set our egos aside and start working together to make a greater impact?

More Quotes from Conference Participants

"You all were amazing -- I've never had a more exhilarating experience at a conference. Nourishing to mind, body and soul!"

- one participant's comments on the Satisfaction Survey

"The setting was beautiful, the range of speakers impressive and the care for the diversity of participants was sincere.... Attending the conference was very replenishing for me. What a gift!"

- Susan Partnow, Let's Talk America

"We were able to connect with many people working on similar types of engagement, share experiences and learn from each other. It was also very stimulating to see the broad range of interests in the field of dialogue and deliberation, and better understand the connections between them."

- Judy Watling and Nandini Saxena, Canadian Policy Research Networks

"I just wanted to let you know what an amazing conference it was in Denver. It deepened my understanding of D&D and I met many wonderful people. I believe events like this help strengthen and grow, not only the D&D community, but the work of conflict resolution and democracy world-wide. It was the best organized conference I have ever attended. You and those that helped you did an amazing job."

- Stephan Gilchrist, Portland State University

"I must say that my attending the national conference this past fall was life altering. The conference really gave me a sense of direction and purpose for the work I'd like to do as well as the vision I have for a more just and sustainable world."

- Matt de Caussin, Intern, Denver District Attorney's Office

"Thank you for putting on such an amazing conference. I thought the conference was absolutely phenomenal. I learned a lot, and I think even more importantly, realized that I am / we are part of a community!"

- Priya Parker, Sustained Dialogue Campus Network

"I've been involved in blitzes of meetings before, but never came away with so many ideas buzzing in my head. Even the diversity issues that arose were a huge learning tool for me about how as a member of a dominant culture it is easy to make assumptions. I hope that is in context as well -- it was visionary to have made the space available for people to talk about being marginalized."

- Lorraine Dillon, The Mainstream Media Project and Both/And

"I have been raving about the conference ever since I got back home to Durango. I have been attending professional conferences for over 20 years and this was the most fulfilling of any of them to me! Thanks for all your work to organize such a stellar event."

- Lauren Patterson, Program Evaluation

"I wanted to thank you and all the organizers of the NCCD conference for a great event, very well organized and especially sensitive to everybody's needs and concerns. It was a great experience for me and it benefited greatly our work. I hope to continue building these relationships and learn from all those extraordinary experiences and people involved in dialogue."

- Marc-André Franche, United Nations Development Programme

"I met more people that I will follow up with at this conference than any in my 30 years of professional experience."

- Stephanie Nestlerode, Omega Point International, Inc.

"Thank you for the incredible work you are doing in creating opportunities for those of us involved in this work to meet, communicate and inspire one another in so many ways."

- Glenna Gerard