

# Picking up the pieces post U.S.-elections

**Location:** Sojourners

**Date:** Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**Time:** 2:30 - 5:00pm

## MEETING SUMMARY

Communities in Transition (CIT) invited fellow conflict resolution practitioners for a peer-2-peer conversation [<sup>1</sup>] to generate ideas for using communication and consensus-building tools to help restore constructive dialogue on Capitol Hill.

The following ideas, grouped by theme, emanated from our discussion:

### **Clarify our objective: what should it be?**

- Build understanding between Congress members, generate empathy, curiosity and find beauty in the "other."
- Make policy actions accessible to people around the country
- Bring communities together
- Affect policy
- Shift congress' communication style from debate to dialogue (i.e from focusing on winning ideas to developing collaborative ideas)
- Involve congress members as actors of change in rebuilding the whole of society that has become fractured

### **Assess Congressional dynamics**

- Assess formal and informal spaces where congress members reach a consensus and the processes and communication skills they use
- Stakeholder mapping to understand who our champions for constructive dialogue may be (ex: who are the staffers with NVC skills?), to understand the issues, build trust and be invited
- Hold focus groups to assess the pulse of communities

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<sup>1</sup> Peer-2-peer conversations are offered by the International Mediators Community of Practice (IMCP) lead by CIT. The IMCP provides an informal platform for discussion between mediation practitioners, trainers, academics and providers of mediation support services who actively engage in international third-party conflict transformation, to strengthen our skills and increase the use of dialogue processes in complex conflict contexts.

### **Heal our biases**

- Re-humanize and get to know the "other" through dialogue between D&R (for practitioners and for staffers)
- Provide facilitated opportunities for members to experience collaborative consensus-building
- Address our own biases within the working group
- Political therapy

### **Demonstrate the added-value of collaborative decision-making**

- Create media/video/blog content where a facilitated conversation occurs between varying positions demonstrating win-win outcomes
- "Repackage" our language so as to be well received by congress members
- Hold public "critical thinking" events that bring media personalities together in a show (ex: Rachel Maddow and Megan Kelly)
- Provide direct mediation services to congress members who hit a road block in their negotiations

### **Connect Congress to diverse communities**

- Integrate diverse community and stakeholder voices at different levels of the policy-making process
- Advocacy initiatives (ex: calls, letters...)
- Explore common values (ex: using patriotism as a way to bring people back together)
- Interact with members in informal spaces (coffee shops, ...)

It was also noted by the group that we should to be mindful of labels and boxes because each community is diverse and complex; to acknowledge the integrity and dignity of people regardless of their voting history; the importance of remaining impartial towards policy outcomes; and that we need to increase the diversity of political thought within this working group.

Suggested organizations to reach out:

- No Labels (ex: pledge for congress members to be problem-solvers)
- Cross-pollinate with organizations doing advocacy work

As next steps we need to clarify our goals, assess where Congress is, challenge our own biases and re-humanize the "other." GMU S-CAR, CIT and Behrendt Consulting will be co-leading the group.