

Promoting Inclusion and Diversity in Hamilton

Measured against the goals and objectives outlined in the 2006 work plan, which served as the basis for the creation of the centre, HCCI has accomplished a great deal in a short period of time. In the first two and half years of its existence HCCI has built highly effective programming and tools of public education and community engagement. It has initiated a broad strategy to promote equity, access and participation in the key sectors of employment, education, health and housing in the Hamilton community. In all of these respects the work of HCCI in its early years has established a positive base – firmly anchored in community engagement, institutional networks and partnerships, and increased public awareness - from which to tackle the formidable challenges of promoting diversity and inclusiveness in the Hamilton Community.

HCCI has responded to deep feelings of exclusion within the community and to gaps in the diversity leadership required to develop community cohesiveness, by creating a combination of initiatives and programs that promote social engagement. We believe that the mobilization of communities is a crucial way of tackling exclusion, particularly when such exclusion is racially based and accompanied by complex social, economic and cultural dimensions.

A powerful way to engage and encourage people is to share their experiences and provide a respectful way of facilitating the sharing of concerns, anger, hopes, fears and dreams. We provided an avenue for achieving this engagement through Public Service Announcements, courtesy of CH-CH TV. Café Conversations were another way that we used to engage people in the creation of welcoming and inclusive communities. Conversations help us understand that we are all part of one community and that we can work toward building better communities.

HCCI Community Mobilization Teams (CMT) have been described by those consulted during the HCCI Strategic Planning as a successful way to engage the grass roots and to increase an inclusive civic, political and social participation, in fact if change has to come and has to be sustainable, it always comes from the grass roots. CMT's goal is the development of meaningful community engagement that gives participants a strong sense of themselves, and their role as contributing individuals actively involved in the life of their community and society.

Engagement is a form of empowerment in which individuals and groups gain a sense of pride and confidence. We saw this pride exhibited during the CMT graduation when civic and political leaders from our community took part of these ceremonies and awarded certificates. We saw confidence in CMT members when they enrolled in the "Train the Trainers Programs" and then forwarded their names as participants in an advanced level of community engagements " The Network of Leaders " that was offered this year.

In our commitment to Promote Inclusion and Diversity in Hamilton we have had the opportunity and the privilege to support many organizations in to their efforts to become diverse and inclusive. We secured funding for a three year Project with the Hamilton Police Service (HPS) to assist the Hamilton Police Service in their diversity and inclusivity processes, and in their recruitment strategies to ensure that the HPS reflects the diverse community. The Best Start Network, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board,

North Hamilton and many other organizations and businesses were assisted in their process toward achieving Cultural Competencies. Diversity approaches should not be reactive responses or strategies for voiding charges on human rights violations. Diversity approaches should be proactive in nature, recognizing the value of diversity to the organization and its impact on the bottom line. A proactive diversity approach is an integral part of an organizations' strategy, it is therefore an "at the table" approach, not an "on the table" approach.

HCCI firmly believes that diversity is measurable and should be measured. An effective diversity measure serves to guide decision making throughout the organization and evaluate performance. However none of these measurements are possible unless employees have an environment that allows them to do their best personal work. Successful organizations recognize that their competitive edge lies in focusing on their employees and their clients. Any organization that wants to improve its performance must attract, motivate and retain all it diverse work force. HCCI plays an active role in many collaborative efforts that make Hamilton unique; such as - the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, the Jobs Collaborative Prosperity (JCP), the Economic Development Advisory Committee, and the Clinical Health Service Plan with the Local Health Integration Network. With the City of Hamilton, HCCI also spearheaded the recruitment of members for the Immigrant Strategy Council.

HCCI has received a great support from the Mayor's office, the City Council and the Department of Community and Social services, we thank them for their support. We also give many thanks to the members of the Governing Council, the Employer Resource Steering Committee and HCCI staff for making HCCI's success possible. To the many volunteers we say, "hats off to you, we cannot imagine HCCI without you". Last but not least , we also give many thanks to SISO Board, Management and staff for their continued support to HCCI.

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