

Establishing an Intentional Culture of Diversity and Inclusion

April 21, 2017

Roller Derby World Summit
Manchester, England



Session Overview

- Proactivity (30 minutes)
 - Barriers to entry/access to roller derby
 - How to reach groups that aren't yet represented in your league, how to cultivate a membership that better reflects the demographics of your larger community (and how to be deliberate in this endeavor)
 - How to be a leader that represents a breadth of individuals of various identities and intersections
- Reactivity (20 minutes)
 - The importance of mediation and support services
 - “Unpacking” feelings of defensiveness



Important language to note...

- **Intersectionality**
 - The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, sexuality, religion, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
- **Microaggressions**
 - The casual degradation of any marginalized group.
- **Privilege**
 - Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group
- **Implicit Bias**
 - Negative associations that people unknowingly hold that are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness.



Proactivity



Joining the panel today...

- Deadeye ★ Officer, WFTDA Technology Pillar
- EJ Kaiser ★ Chair, WFTDA Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- F-Bomb ★ Vice President, WFTDA Board of Directors
- Furrocious ★ Secretary, WFTDA Board of Directors
- Gaz ★ All-star Skater, London Roller Girls
- Nada Ben Jemaa ★ Team Manger, Roller Derby Beirut



Proactivity

- Sample language for proactive recruitment materials:
 - Our league is especially interested in prospective athletes, officials, and volunteers from who are members of underrepresented groups.
 - Examples of our league's commitment to diversity and inclusivity can be found [on our website/in our training materials/in our League Handbook/etc.].
 - We are especially interested in athletes, officials, and volunteers who can contribute to diversity and inclusion initiatives through their own outreach, volunteerism, and service experience.
 - Prospective athletes, officials, and volunteers should have knowledge of, or be open to learning about, intercultural effectiveness so as to engage with our broadly diverse roller derby community.
 - Our league is committed to maintaining a safe environment that encourages knowledge of, respect for, and development of skills to effectively engage with individuals from diverse communities.



Proactive Strategies

- Sample proactive tactics for recruitment and retention:
 - Create a mentorship program
 - Create a sponsorship program
 - Create, or encourage the creation of an affinity program within your league to encourage minority/underrepresented talent (athletes, officials, and volunteers)
 - Represent minorities on your league website and in pamphlets and other marketing materials
 - Volunteer to be a guest speaker representing your league at events that focus on various identities/intersections that are under-represented in your league
 - Consider proactive training within your league, but also understand that no two people and their journeys will be the same. Canned information is not sufficient to address the emotional needs of all of your members.



Reactivity



Reactivity

- A huge hindrance to inclusivity is complacency
- Complacency is enabled by feelings of defensiveness. Let's unpack those.
 - Depersonalize the issue at hand -- focus on the action/behavior/language, not the person.
 - Keep intersectionality in mind. We all hold a unique set of privileges and disadvantages.
 - Survey the landscape, and empathize appropriately. What extra overhead might a marginalized person be enduring?
 - Consider the extreme factors that prevent people from speaking up in the first place.
 - How have your preconceptions been formed with a limited number of data points?



Reactive Strategies

- Mediation and support services/programs
 - **What is mediation?**
 - A process for individuals or groups to work with a third-party to discuss the problems, identify the key issues, and explore practical ways to resolve or manage the conflict.
 - It is a powerful tool to assist parties to resolve their differences and find a way to positively move forward, no matter the issue.
 - Mediations are usually conducted in confidence and the mediator is impartial.
 - **What is involved in mediation?**
 - Mediation is a flexible process, which will vary depending on the needs of the parties. Usually a mediation process will consist of:
 - Separate preliminary meetings with each party;
 - Joint meetings with all parties to discuss and explore the issues;
 - Generating and developing options for resolution;
 - Coming to an agreement.



Reactive Strategies

- Mediation and support services/programs continued
 - **Why is a structured conflict resolution program important?**
 - The right dialogical practices provide the bridges that bring together disparate and different identities and intersectionalities in ways that enable them to overcome the powerful barriers that prevent them from sharing in what your community has to offer.
- Sample model for mediation program:
 - **Implement a facilitative, co-mediation model. This model is premised on three main principles:**
 - The self-determination of the parties;
 - The informed consent of the parties;
 - The neutrality of the mediators.



Reactive Strategies

- Sample model for mediation program continued:
 - Help the parties create a process that best suits their dispute and enables them to reach a mutually agreeable solution.
 - Do not endeavor to solve the parties' problem or impose on them solutions of your own making – rather, create a safe and neutral environment in which they can discuss their problem and hopefully reach resolution.
 - Make sure each dispute is mediated by two mediators.



Reactive Strategies

- Why support services?
 - Not all problems can be solved with confrontation, mediated or otherwise.
 - Support services emphasize empathy over impartiality.
 - There is tremendous value in standing with a marginalized group, even when you risk being wrong.
 - Marginalized individuals cannot advance unless we offer them the benefit of the doubt and understand the extra burdens they carry.
 - League structures that are designed to be impartial are inherently asymmetrical when dealing with a power disparity. Support services give a boost to organizational equity.
 - Robust systems of support provide institutional coverage for the most at-risk.



Reactive Strategies

- What can support services look like in your league?
 - Individual skater representatives who can...
 - Sponsor and advocate for marginalized skaters
 - Recommend courses of action when navigating league bureaucracy and politics
 - Be not just allies, but accomplices
 - Challenge or disrupt issues rooted in league culture or tradition
 - use their clout and influence to counter complacent attitudes
 - connect marginalized individuals with resources they don't know about or otherwise cannot access
 - Being an individual accomplice is great, but operating in an official, league-sanctioned capacity is better.



Resources

- The Importance of Mediation and Conflict Resolution - <https://www.theicehouse.co.nz/26019-2/>
- Harvard Mediation Program - <http://clinics.law.harvard.edu/hmp/training/mediation-model/>

