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## Network of Community Builders for South Africa

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9<sup>th</sup> November 2009

This is a celebratory message – a story about community building that will hopefully encourage and inspire you.

A few people from the Western Cape Education Department attended the Community Building workshop in Cape Town in October. Thandi Jafta (Circuit manager for Circuit 5, Metro South), also attended. She was so inspired by the experience that she decided to use some of the ideas for their upcoming Education Indaba.

On Saturday, I was privileged enough to facilitate the **Circuit 5 Education Indaba**. Wow! What an experience! The Circuit 5 team did a fantastic job at getting 180 people from their community to this event. Each of the 18 schools were invited to bring a multi-stakeholder group (principal, 2 teachers, a current learner, x-learner, member of staff who is not a teacher, 2 parents). In addition to these teams, they also invited people from SAPS, Social Services, other WCED departments, etc.

Their theme for the Indaba was “**A New Conversation**” and their tagline “**Our Children, Our Hope, Our Responsibility**”.

The session was held in a beautiful school hall (Sinethemba High School) – situated in Philippi, a very ‘poor’ community with the majority of people living in shacks or RDP houses. However, this community is not defined by poverty. It is not who they are. This is a generous and vibrant community, committed to do the best they can for their children. They loved the community building process and (most of all), enjoyed becoming connected to each other. They got the message that connectedness & relatedness is a pre-requisite to addressing the issues that they face.

Bruce Copley & Barbara Kennedy brought music and beauty into the session. It was such a joy to work with them! The whole session was truly an example of the alternative future that we are all committed to.

We asked the participants for their take-aways after the session and here are some of their comments:

- We realize that the education of our children is the responsibility of all of us – we can’t leave it to the educators or the Education Department
- We love that this was a new conversation – not focused on what is wrong, but rather looking at the possibility of a different future for our learners
- This session created an opportunity for principals, educators, teachers, learners and other stakeholders to talk together – we realize that we don’t talk to each other enough!
- We are committed to create community building events like this at each of our schools

One of the participants pressed all my buttons when he said “**We have NPOs working with teachers, and other NPOs working with learners, and others working with Principals and social services. What we need is an NPO who can help us to get closer to each other, so that we can work together for our learners**”. I am sure that I don’t have to tell you how this affected me - you have all seen me weep when I am reminded of my calling ☺.

We left them with a message from Peter Block: “*If you want to change the world, then we need to do so one room at a time. Which room? The room that you are in*”

We’d love to know if you have been able to apply any of the community building ideas in your local community – please join the Facebook group and load your stories and photos here

<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=3436587&op=1&view=all&subj=639543114&id=612582131#/group.php?gid=180175241022&ref=ts>

For those of you who were not able to attend the Community Building sessions in October, please join the Facebook group for people who want to be kept informed of our plans for March:

<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?pid=3436587&op=1&view=all&subj=639543114&id=612582131#/group.php?gid=162467604613&ref=search&sid=639543114.2924327974..1>

Much love  
Louise

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