

The Art of Everyday Peace Building

Ardoyne and Shankill - An Alternative Story





I ntroduction

This book provides a visual record of the reflections and discussion about community, diversity and peace building that took place on CRIS' tenth consecutive family Community Relations residential programme with Holy Cross and Edenderry Nursery Schools from North Belfast during the school year 2015 – 2016.

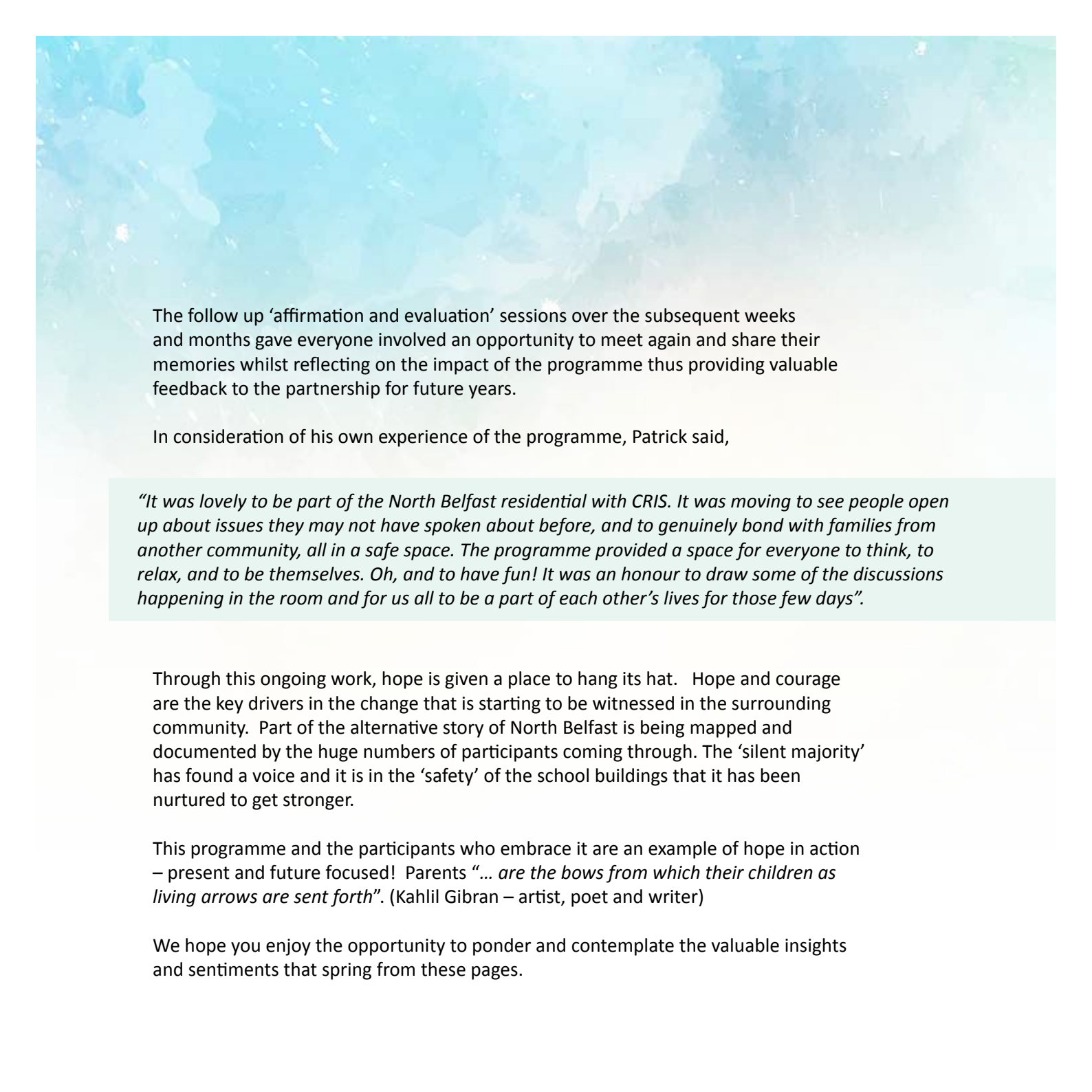
CRIS and Nursery School partners continue to be motivated and inspired by the energy and commitment of the parents and carers from North Belfast who regularly take part in this extensive Community Relations and peace building programme - which is nearing its 20th year.

Over time and through hard work and creative endeavour, an incredible appetite to participate in this programme has been developed among the entire school community. The partnership mantra, 'it's not something we do, it is part of who we are', is championed on a daily basis.

We would like to mark this special anniversary of 'every day peace building' by creating this booklet and showcasing the thought provoking work that happens between the schools on a daily basis.

The beautiful illustrations detailed are the work of the artist Patrick Sanders who sat in on this year's residential programme that took place at Corrymeela, a peace and reconciliation centre located on the North Coast of Antrim.

With care and precision Patrick has captured the feelings, opinions and discussions that were shared in the workshops that spanned across the three days. Conversations explored division and togetherness, difficulties and hope.



The follow up 'affirmation and evaluation' sessions over the subsequent weeks and months gave everyone involved an opportunity to meet again and share their memories whilst reflecting on the impact of the programme thus providing valuable feedback to the partnership for future years.

In consideration of his own experience of the programme, Patrick said,

"It was lovely to be part of the North Belfast residential with CRIS. It was moving to see people open up about issues they may not have spoken about before, and to genuinely bond with families from another community, all in a safe space. The programme provided a space for everyone to think, to relax, and to be themselves. Oh, and to have fun! It was an honour to draw some of the discussions happening in the room and for us all to be a part of each other's lives for those few days".

Through this ongoing work, hope is given a place to hang its hat. Hope and courage are the key drivers in the change that is starting to be witnessed in the surrounding community. Part of the alternative story of North Belfast is being mapped and documented by the huge numbers of participants coming through. The 'silent majority' has found a voice and it is in the 'safety' of the school buildings that it has been nurtured to get stronger.

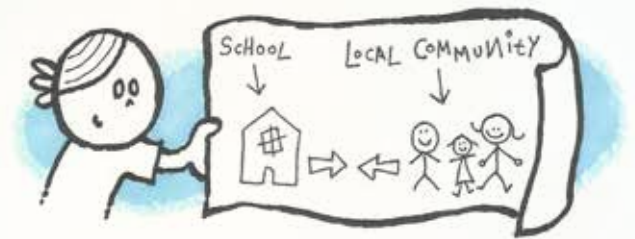
This programme and the participants who embrace it are an example of hope in action – present and future focused! Parents *"... are the bows from which their children as living arrows are sent forth"*. (Kahlil Gibran – artist, poet and writer)

We hope you enjoy the opportunity to ponder and contemplate the valuable insights and sentiments that spring from these pages.

A Journey across Two Decades

Edenderry Nursery School and Holy Cross Nursery School are situated either side of one of Northern Ireland's more turbulent interfaces - the Crumlin road. Throughout the long shadow of the 'Troubles', although there is only a mile between them, both communities have seemed more like countries apart - separated by 'peace walls' and entrenched by fear, mistrust and conflict.

Ardoyne and Shankill measure highly on a range of 'deprivation indicators'. Yet in spite of this, it has been the experience of CRIS, and Holy Cross and Edenderry Nursery Schools, that the communities are rich in relationships, networks and hope. There is a tangible will and desire to be part of change and investment in the future landscape for their children.



The schools, and the families attached to them, strive to paint a new picture for their children and themselves - a future that allows humanity and aspiration to flourish.

Since its inception, the programme has reached hundreds of families and over three thousand Nursery and Primary School children from these North Belfast communities. Many mums, dads, grandmothers, uncles, have become like 'old friends' and 'new neighbours'. They are passionate advocates for the 'Buddy Up' programme ensuring its growth and reach out to new families coming through the every year.

The Buddy System and Yearly Programme

On an annual basis staff and families who are involved, work with CRIS to plan, resource and deliver the activities and programmes that bring the job of peace right into the heart of the school community. Without them the 'Buddy' programme would never have grown in the way that it has.

There are many aspects to the yearly schedule of activities and training that takes place.

This partnership provides a shared men's programme for all the dads and lads in the children's lives; multiple "*Buddy Up!*" school swap days (where mums, dads and other family members also pack a school bag for the day); a community relations curriculum of learning for parents/ carers; shared fundraisers; socio-political tours; skills development courses such as driving theory, well-being and parenting courses; whole school shared fun days; and of course the much celebrated family Community Relations residential programme which has reached its 10th year.

The partnership of three are pioneers of the this whole school community '*Buddy System*' and are keen to share this practice both at home and abroad.

The '*Buddy System*' was highlighted in the recent government strategy 'Together Building a United Community' (TBUC) where it states a commitment to roll the programme out "... to all publicly run Nursery and Primary Schools in Northern Ireland".

School Principals and CRIS have shared platforms and talked about its philosophy and mechanics at peace building conferences; at school leadership training events; and with local teacher training colleges. In addition CRIS has shared this practice internationally in other regions where ethno-political conflict has left its mark, such as with the Israeli Ministry of Education.

The families from Holy Cross and Edenderry Nursery (who have ultimately helped to shape this practice through their support, participation and feedback over almost 2 decades), represent a growing voice of togetherness that is moving beyond the old narrative of distrust and separation.

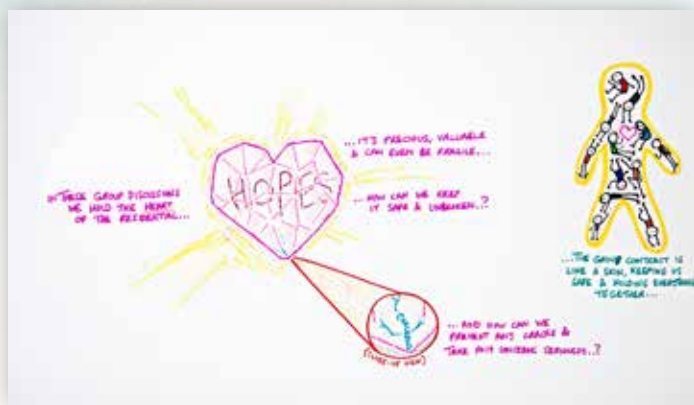


"It's hard to put it down in words. For us, the Buddy System is inspiring. It built our children's confidence and it built our confidence. It allowed us to open up to who we are. It has given us great hope for our children's future."

Two parents involved in the Buddy System

Nurturing Safe Spaces







THESE THINGS CAN BE A PART OF
OUR IDENTITY...



...BUT DO THEY ALSO HOLD US
BACK FROM MOVING FORWARD..?

FOR SO MANY "DEALS"...



...IT'S BEEN "THEM & US"...

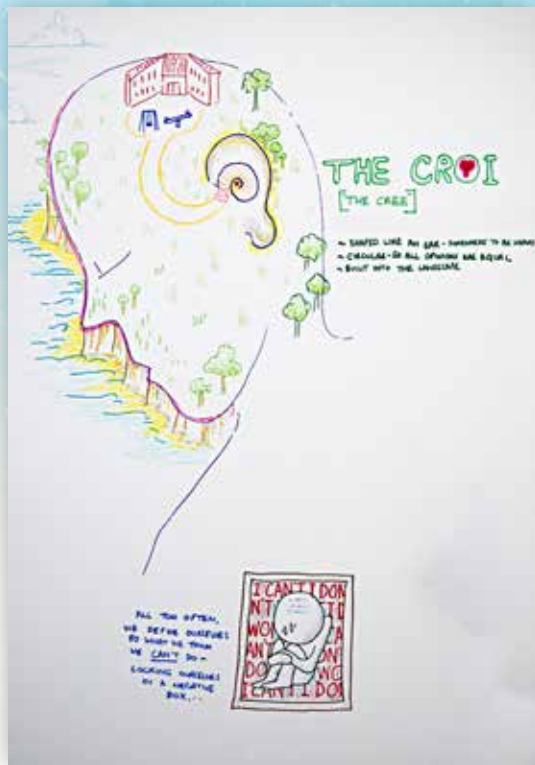


... BUT NOW THERE ARE NOT JUST "TWO COMMUNITIES"... SO WHO IS "US"?
DOES THERE ALWAYS HAVE TO BE A "THEM"??

"CLIQUE"
CAN BE GOOD
TO HAVE AS IT
MEANS YOU
ARE WITH
FRIENDS...



...BUT WHAT IF YOU'RE
ON THE OUTSIDE
LOOKING IN?



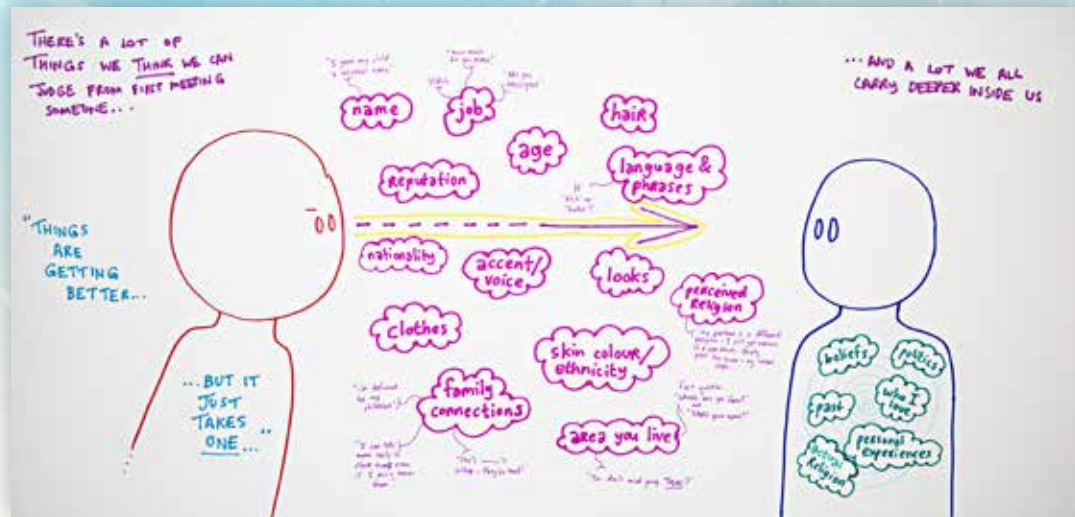
Sharing Stories of Identity





IDENTITIES WITHIN IDENTITIES...





BEFORE WE
TRY TO CHANGE
THE WORLD,
WE MAY
NEED TO
LOOK AT
OURSELVES...



...AND SOMEONE
IS A PART OF
WHO I AM...



...AND THERE
WILL ALWAYS BE A
PART OF ME INSIDE IT...



Something
so "big"
can be
so personal...

...we pull other
people into
this...



...because of the
stories they
carry inside...



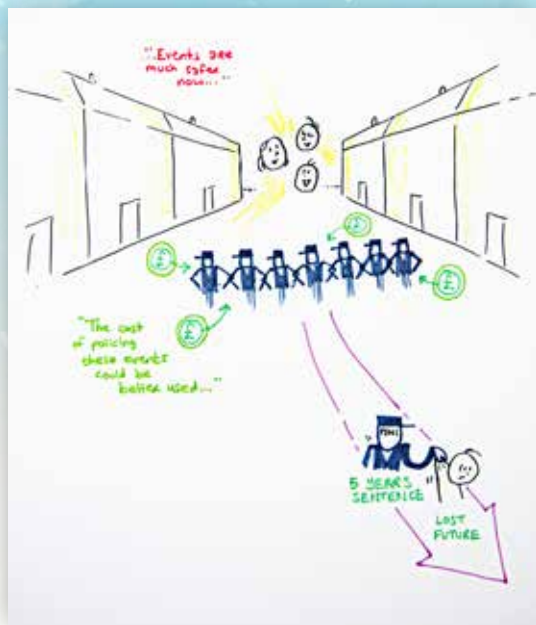
...people often
don't know how
small...



Growing Our Community









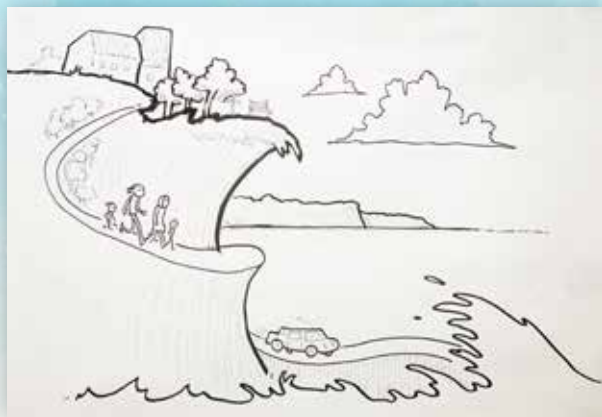
Moving Forward ñ Lessons and I mpact











A Little More about the Artist

Patrick Sanders is a Belfast-based illustrator who has specialised in using cartoons to document events, discussions and ideas for over ten years.

He is also the illustrator-in-residence for Scope NI, NICVA's online magazine (scopeni.nicva.org)

Website: **www.patricksanders.co.uk**



FB: Patrick Sanders, Illustrator

Acknowledgements

CRIS would like to sincerely thank the ongoing endeavour of all the parents, children, and other family members who are linked to Holy Cross and Edenderry Nursery Schools over many years.

The staff and Principals from both schools have an enduring commitment to this essential work and model the very essence of it on a daily basis. For this CRIS would like to thank them for continuing to make this work enjoyable, meaningful and of impact.

Thank you to Patrick Sanders who has been a joy to work with and who has captured this special story with sensitivity, authenticity and care.

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Thank you to Bryan and Steve at Fresh Graphics for their endless patience, tremendous creativity, humour and particularly for their steer on design of such a professional product.

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Community Relations Council







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