LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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Peace and Reconciliation Group

- Registered charity established in 1976.
- Mission: "To promote the development of community understanding and co-operation through the delivery of community relations and community development programmes."
Presentation Overview

- Northern Ireland: Historical and political context
- Current educational system and barriers to change
- Peace and Reconciliation Group exemplar: “9000 Years on an Island”
- Proposals for the future
Northern Ireland: Historical & Political Context
Partition in 1921 shifted the power dynamics in Northern Ireland

Protestant/British Perspective:
- Stay in union to maintain power structure

Catholic/Irish Perspective:
- Self determination
- End discrimination against Catholics

Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom
“The Troubles” (roughly 1960s - 1990s)
Concentrations of conflict fatalities between 1969 and 2001 in Northern Ireland
Segregation exists across societal sectors
Current Educational System & Barriers to Change
# Four Main Categories of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Controlled</th>
<th>Maintained</th>
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<tr>
<td>Managed by Education and Library Boards; generally Protestant</td>
<td>Managed by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; Catholic</td>
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<th>Voluntary</th>
<th>Integrated</th>
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<td>Owned and managed by trustees; Generally segregated by religion</td>
<td>Managed by a Board of Governors; Religiously mixed</td>
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Integrated education promotes community cohesion
How does Northern Ireland define integrated education?

- Equality
- Faith & Values
- Parental Involvement
- Social Responsibility
First Barrier to Change: Government based on power sharing

Cross-party support is necessary to pass legislation
Second Barrier to Change: Lack of support for educators

Teachers need help overcoming fears:

- Hidden political agendas
- Addressing sensitive issues
- “Getting it wrong”
- Backlash from parents
Third Barrier to Change: Inadequate teacher training
Exemplar Program: “9,000 Years on an Island”
Program Objectives

- Address post conflict issues specific to the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
- Develop concept of a shared heritage and promote idea of a shared future
- Build relationships, challenge misconceptions and reduce fears
Program Characteristics

- Partnership between PRG and the Donegal Education Centre
- Funded by Special European Union Programmes Body Peace III
- Eight schools, partnered cross border and cross community
- Focused on “Famine & Emigration,” “Plantation,” and “Traditional Music and Dance”
- Active teacher participation
Program Challenges

- Composite classes in rural areas
- Substitute teacher costs
- Travel time
- Other budget/financial constraints
Strategies for Success

- Consultation with stakeholder institutions
- Energetic, talented facilitators
- Ongoing evaluation
Results

- 200 students and 10 teachers completed the one year partnership activities
- 1,000 packs distributed to schools, libraries, museums and youth workers
- Project identified as “Model of Excellence and Good Practice” by SEUPB
It’s an important beginning
Proposals for the Future
Short Term Proposals

- Secure funding for long term projects
- Provide more training and support for teachers
- Update the curriculum
Long Term Proposals

- Integrate teacher training
- Integrate more of the education system
- Reform the governmental structures
Key Takeaways

- Addressing the impact from the violence has to be part of the solution
- It’s critical to acknowledge the true problem: self confidence, not classroom disputes
- The creation of resource packs can make a program replicable
Questions?

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