

# Celebrating Power, Privilege, Access and Inclusion in NVC!

## Building Trust in our NVC Community and Beyond.

By Ann Birot-Salsbury, July 2019.

I want to share a celebration.

After 15 days living in community, it was hard to leave the Pre-Intensive and Intensive workshops that recently completed in the south of France. We came from 4 continents (Africa, America, Asia and Europe) and many more countries, different genders, skin colors, sexual preferences, languages and experiences. We came from countries that have colonized other countries as well as from countries which have been colonized. The subject that we explored together during two of the 4 days of the Pre-Intensive and the 9-day Intensive was Power, Privilege, Access and Inclusion. I felt a tremendous sense of cohesion of the collective, even if at times it was uncomfortable. I am honored and inspired to have lived this with others who wanted to explore this subject that some may consider divisive or even taboo. My experience is that we not only explored the subject, we directly applied it to our own situations individually and as a community both during the intensive and for situations outside this moment. I am truly touched by my colleagues' willingness to speak vulnerably about topics of perceived power differences in our NVC and world community that stimulate pain, in hopes of getting to the other side and moving towards unity by accepting and embracing our diversity.

The metaphor that I came up with for this Intensive experience is that we were all marinating and tenderizing in the same pot. Being exposed to ideas and terms that might be new to us or at least have a different twist and certainly using new examples that were brought forward to explore together.

We started a group process to look at the challenges between NVC Certification Candidates and Certified Trainers in the francophone community and beyond. Not only did the certified trainers and candidates express themselves, but also people who are neither "labelled" one or the other and yet are part of our community. Using this real-life example of perceived power differences that are reinforced by our systems and structures and that impact many who were present met many needs for me, including shared vulnerability, transparency, commitment, integrity, trust and hope that we may reach something that is more inclusive and more effective for all.

We started to examine decolonization in our systems, structures, cultures, etc. By starting this process, we raised awareness of how deep the impact of colonization continues to be and how easy it is to engage in behaviors that are embedded in the beliefs that enabled colonization if we don't make the time to bring them to consciousness. This is delicate work that can easily trigger all involved, yet having the space of a 9-day Intensive allowed enough of a sense of safety and trust to start to surface some of these behaviors and to start to identify new ways we can move forward together.

I can understand how others who have not experienced an Intensive with the theme of Power, Privilege, Access and Inclusion might be anxious about it or perhaps might consider it to be divisive to offer such a theme. I found it anything but divisive. I found it really helpful in starting to name what is in regard to societal messages, customs, systems, etc that are often internalized and that can at an unconscious and even conscious level encourage separation in so much that we say and do.

Incredible transparency and self-disclosure was modeled, including of the finances for the Intensive. The organizing team offered a session to show us the intensive finances. They provided time for us to ask questions and invited participants to be part of a group that determined how to allocate monies received that were above the planned budget.

Although I was born in the US and discovered NVC while living there, I have lived in France for the past 10 years where I am part of a vital national community of giraffes. In France, the national motto is Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. My experience is that the notion of equality is incredibly important in France, yet I am longing to see programs that support equity for people from groups that have less access to resources, including those in our NVC community. Thanks to this Intensive, I was finally able to be part of conversations about the difference between equality and equity and to be part of an increased awareness in the collective of the importance of equity. I am seeing the seeds of these conversations being infused in a new process to start to address the issues (therefore those relating to an understanding that we don't all start at the same place, we don't all have the same access to the same kind of resources) in our francophone NVC community and beyond.

We were supported by an amazing team of translators coordinated by Farrah Baut-Carlier that included Saleem Ebrahim from our community of trainers and that allowed us to cross many boundaries to have these conversations that I believe are seeding positive change.

I have deep gratitude to the organizing team of Thibault Bouchette, Catherine Brunelle Durain, Alex Durain, Isabelle Montigny and Isabelle Capy who worked for 18 months to realize their vision of bringing these topics to the Francophone community. Thanks to the Intensive training team of Jeyanthi Siva, Bob Wentworth, Anne Bourrit, Sarri Bater, and Roxy Manning and the assistants Amal Mekouar and Annie Scarborough!

Although I am writing to share my thoughts about the focus on Power, Privilege, Access and Inclusion, I also want to celebrate the 2 two-day Pre-Intensive trainings as well. Roxy Manning, supported by Mireille van Bremen who brought her expertise and passion for graphic recording, helped us explore how NVC can be used to create bridges between people. Mireille and Roxy together in the second two days guided us through a process on Designing Impactful NVC trainings. It was inspirational in the training design program to see how the awareness of Power, Privilege, Access and Inclusion that was raised in the first two days increased our capacity to

design trainings that truly could be more inclusive and attend to the needs of both traditional and non-traditional NVC audiences.

I encourage you to support and attend future Intensives and other trainings that speak to this topic of Power, Privilege, Access and Inclusion, especially if you notice discomfort when you hear the topic. I have high confidence in our NVC community's ability to navigate this subject and contribute to positive social change. In fact, I can't imagine attending another Intensive unless it has a focus on increasing awareness of Power, Privilege, Access and Inclusion and how these subjects play out in our daily lives!