

“Investing In Lives”

The History of The Youth Service in Northern Ireland: Volume 2 (1974 -2015)

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The Development and Delivery of Community Relations through Youth Work

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The Development of Youth Work in A Contested Space

In order to fully understand how youth workers have responded to the challenge of enduring, violent, political instability in the contested North Eastern corner of Ireland from 1973 to the present day it is first necessary to review how the youth service came into being and how the historical inter-community divisions affected and influenced its structure, role and place within Northern Irish society.

Youth work in the British Isles can be traced back to the Sunday School movement of the 1780s. In the 19th century the Sunday Schools provided the foundations upon which a relational-driven youth service was subsequently built. This nascent youth service emerged initially in urban areas in response to widespread concerns about the perceived moral and physical decline of young men (and, to a lesser extent, young women) that accompanied the industrial revolution. This evolution was driven by the efforts of a number of early trailblazers who were possessed of a profound evangelical zeal. Their mission was to promote the physical and moral wellbeing of the young within a framework of Christian instruction and values.

Prominent amongst these pioneers was George Williams who, in 1844, established in London the forerunner of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), which quickly went on to become the first global youth organisation. The objective of Williams's movement was the "improvement of the spiritual condition of the younger men... by the formation of Bible classes, family and social prayer meetings, mutual improvement societies, or any other spiritual agency". Four decades later in Glasgow, George Smith adopted some of Williams's principles into his Boys' Brigade; a uniformed youth organisation that reflected the values of an age of militarism and nationalism. The BB's objective was (and remains): "The advancement of Christ's Kingdom among boys and the promotion of habits of Reverence, Discipline, Self-Respect, and all that tends towards a true Christian Manliness."¹

By the turn of the century both of these organisations and their female counterparts (Young Women's Christian Association and the Girls' Brigade) had established a foothold in Ireland generally and had been taken up with particular fervour in the industrial North East of Ireland. These pioneers were subsequently to be joined in the early 1900s by the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and Boys and Girls Clubs Unions.

¹ <http://boys-brigade.org.uk/our-history/>

The period in which youth work was being embedded into the churches and communities of Ireland corresponded with a period of political instability and increasing volatility. Momentum grew across the island for Catholic emancipation and political self-determination. Indeed, work with young people came to be seen in some quarters as a vehicle for the advancement of political ideals. In 1909 Hobson Bulmer (a Quaker from Belfast) with the support of Countess Markievicz transformed the “Red Branch Knights” of the Irish National Boy Scouts and renamed them Na Fianna Éireann¹. The Fianna’s stated aim was to promote “Irish culture and national independence”. Meanwhile in Belfast in 1912 the prominent Presbyterian and civic leader, Fred Geddes, formed the Young Citizens Volunteers (YCV) – an initially, avowedly ‘non-political’ uniformed organisation for young adult men modelled on the Boys Brigade. As the Home Rule Crisis deepened the YCV abandoned its apolitical stance and became a battalion within the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)².

Both Na Fianna Éireann and the YCV played roles in gun-running activities – the YCV for the UVF in Larne and the Fianna for the Irish Volunteers in Howth. At the onset of the First World War in 1914 the YCV enlisted en-masse into the 14th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles. The Fianna, in marked contrast, were actively involved in the republican garrisons during the 1916 Easter Rising against British rule in Ireland.

The constitutional division of the island in May 1921 created a six-county state with a significant Protestant/Unionist majority (approx. 67%); Northern Ireland was constructed in such a way as to guarantee and ensure the maintenance of the Union with Great Britain. It also retained within its borders a minority Roman Catholic population – many of whom harboured a dream of an Ireland united and free from British governance. Northern Ireland was, from its very inception, inherently unstable.

Youth organisations had shown themselves to be subject to fractures along lines of faith and doctrine before the partition of Ireland. The underpinning ideological tenets of the Boys Brigade and the Girls Brigade, for example, created a schism between the ‘reformed’ churches (primarily Presbyterian and Methodist) and the established Church (Church of England/Ireland). Theological and secular disputes ultimately resulted in the establishment of

² Ulster Scots Community Network booklet: <http://www.ulster-scots.com/uploads/USCNYCV10.pdf>

the Church Lads Brigade in 1891 which formed its first company in Belfast in 1895. Similarly, in 1900, a Catholic Boys Brigade also came into being.

In 1917, shortly after the Easter Rising in Dublin, whilst the First World War still raged, the Irish Division of the YWCA withdrew from the YWCA of Great Britain for what were officially stated as ‘non-political reasons’.

The development of Scouting was similarly affected by politico-religious schisms. Ireland was an early adopter of the emerging Scouting movement; in 1908 Scout Troops formed in Dublin, Bray, Greystones, Dundalk and Belfast. However, during the 1920’s the focus of the existing Scout Association, which tended to have a pro-British, imperialistic and Protestant image, began to fall from favour. This ultimately led in 1927 to the formation of a break-away organisation, the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland (CBSI). Although they had been grounded on Baden-Powell’s *Scout Method*, the CBSI was (initially) unaffiliated with his World Organisation of the Scout Movement.

Catholic parishes within Northern Ireland chose to affiliate their scout troops with the southern-based CBSI. In contrast, the NI Scout Association had the majority of its units based in Protestant churches and retained a link to the UK Scout Association with a concomitant promise to “Honour the Queen” and the ceremonial display of the Union Flag.

Thus youth organisations in Northern Ireland were established within the context of a contested and divided society. Their alignment along the faith fault-line in Northern Ireland limited opportunities for social contact between young people. Youth work did not merely reflect sectarian separation it actively sustained it. The youth service became in effect an element of the ‘ethnic frontier’.³

Ironically, youth work had had from its earliest days expressed a deep concern for social justice:

- The 1st World Alliance of YMCAs took place in 1855 and had included in their first mission statement a commitment to building a human community based on ‘justice’, ‘peace’ and ‘reconciliation’⁴.

³ Frank Wright 1996

⁴ Prouty et al 1955

- Emmeline Pethick who was instrumental in the founding of the first Girls Clubs wrote in 1898: “The aim in the clubs must be to make good citizens; and our present endeavour to represent the rights and claims of the young, until they have entered into their citizenship.”⁵

One of the earliest perspectives on youth work was that it was *character building*. The advocates of this approach saw youth work as a means through which a major threat to the values and the society (i.e. the behaviour of young people) could be mitigated. The thinking behind this approach was that:

‘If enough character is produced by education and youth work, the mature citizens that emerge will find a way to make institutions of the country run smoothly and humanely’⁶

Furthermore, Mark Smith (1988) identified that much early youth work had been motivated by a drive to mobilise individuals and groups to work for structural changes and the extension of rights in order to bring about ‘institutional reform’⁷.

In the context of the deeply divided and contested society in the six counties of the North-East of Ireland the paradox of youth work from the 1970s onwards was that it was both part of the problem and, through its relational focus, possessed an inherent potential to contribute to a resolution of the conflict.

Divided Education

The National School system was set up in Ireland in 1831 with a primary objective to ‘unite in one system children of different creeds’ and was ‘to look with peculiar favour’ on schools jointly managed by Catholics and Protestants. The individual churches, however, pressurised the government to allow them to control their own schools. Their resistance was so effective that, by the mid-nineteenth century, only 4% of national schools were under mixed management.

⁵ Pethick 1898

⁶ Butters and Newell 1978

⁷ Smith 1988

The first Education Act passed by the new Northern Ireland parliament in 1923 again attempted to replace church schools with a single, unified, non-denominational system. The Act was strongly rejected by the churches on both sides and, as a consequence, Northern Ireland developed an educational system divided along religious lines. This division meant that children studied different subjects, read different books, received instruction in different religions and, perhaps most importantly, learnt different perspectives on history according to their political/religious background.⁸

The dearth of contact between the two communities had in effect become institutionalised through a system of formal education that served to ensure enduring division.

Partition and the Troubles

Following the partition of Ireland in 1921 the Unionist population in the North felt itself to be in an unassailably dominant position – albeit one that required perpetual vigilance in order to defend itself against a covetous neighbour in the south and the occasional, poorly supported outbreak of Republican insurrection (as in 1942-44 and the Border Campaign of 1956-62).

In stark comparison to the economic boom that accompanied the rapid industrialisation of the previous century, Northern Ireland failed to match the economic and social developments taking place elsewhere in the UK in the mid-20th century. Shipbuilding and linen production had been the bastions of the NI economy before the war. Both of these industries declined rapidly in the 1950s and, by the 1960s, the proportion of the Northern Ireland population that was unemployed was more than twice that of GB. The region was widely recognised as being the most socially deprived region of the UK yet, in a prime case of "tuppence ha'penny looking down on tuppence", even the most deprived working class Protestants reckoned themselves to be superior to Catholics.

The Unionist Government acted at a national and local level to benefit those who supported them at the Polling Station; state bodies were established with an inherent Protestant/pro-union bias. To make matters worse, constituency boundaries were manipulated in order to ensure minimal Nationalist/Catholic representation in political governance (gerrymandering). In

⁸ Hayes et al 2007

response the Catholic population chose to opt out of a society from which they had been effectively excluded. That began to change in the 1960s.

Inspired by Martin Luther King, the US Civil Rights Movement and the revolutionary student spirit of the late '60s the Catholic-nationalist minority (with the support of a number of liberal Protestants) began to challenge this 'second-class citizenship'. Civil Rights demonstrations took place and were met with resistance from both the police and a state-militia (the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Special Constabulary, 'B' Specials).

In the midst of a particularly intense period of political and sectarian rioting in Belfast and Derry in 1969 the Stormont Government requested military support from Westminster to diffuse the crisis. The arrival of the British Army on the streets of Northern Ireland in August that year is generally regarded as marking the start of period of violent inter-community conflict that became known as 'the Troubles'.

A combination of fear, intimidation and violence in the following months led to the biggest population movement in Europe since the Second World War as the two communities physically separated. Previously mixed areas became exclusively one or the other. Those communities of Northern Ireland that had been divided now became 'polarised'.

Mari Fitzduff provided an illustration of the deep and all-pervasive nature of the impact of this polarisation:

“In rural areas many of the smaller villages are completely 'owned' by one tradition or the other; ownership is easily recognised from the flag flying on lampposts and houses, from murals and graffiti painted on the walls, from kerb-stones painted in the different national colours...

City lives are no less separated. The many leisure centres are usually associated with a particular tradition, in some cases because they do not open on Sunday (a Protestant tradition) or because of the name of a centre or the symbols or flags displayed therein. Border areas within the cities are usually well defined by flags and graffiti and painted kerbstones...

The education system is almost completely segregated...

Sports in Northern Ireland also generally reflect the denominational split. Catholics generally play Gaelic football, camogie and hurling, games indigenous to Ireland. Protestants generally play rugby, hockey and cricket at school, games more usually associated with Britain. While soccer football is played by both communities support for teams is mainly on a denominational basis...

Cultural celebrations, and in particular those marches and festivities that celebrate particular victories, or commemorate particular losses are often divisive and sometimes violent occasions. Activities such as music and dancing are usually aligned to particular identities, for example Irish, or Scottish/British. And use of the Irish language has often been a particularly divisive issue between the communities.”⁹

Between 1969 and the signing of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998 more than 3,600 people were killed and thousands more were injured in the conflict. It has been calculated that, in relation to population size, this would have been the equivalent of 115,000 fatalities in United Kingdom as a whole¹⁰.

Young people were statistically at greater risk of being killed during the troubles than the rest of the population. The Cost of the Troubles Report identified that just over a third of all victims were aged between 15 and 24 and about half between 15 and 29. Those aged 19-20 had the highest death rate of any age group in Northern Ireland¹¹. This simple figure, however disturbing, disguises the fact that these victims were not equally dispersed geographically or demographically. It has been shown that the overwhelming majority of those who died during this period fell within four specific classifications:

1. They lived in contiguous territories (e.g. intercommunity interfaces in Belfast or L/Derry).
2. They lived in certain contested rural locations (often in close proximity to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland e.g. South Armagh).
3. They were involved in paramilitary activity.
4. They were members of (or worked for) the security forces.

⁹ Fitzduff 1996

¹⁰ Hargie et al 2003

¹¹ Marie-Therese Fay et al 1998 & 1999

Youth workers endeavouring to build bridges between the divided communities were also targeted. As one youth worker from the time commented:

We were open to attack on the one side that, by fostering links with the Protestant community, we were cow-towing to the British state that was oppressing the Catholic minority and on the other side that engaging with Catholics was to give legitimacy to the concerns of those that were trying to overthrow the state.

Many youth workers who engaged in community relations work were physically or verbally intimidated – some lost their lives in indiscriminate attacks, others it would appear were specifically singled out.

Sean Armstrong who had been organising international holidays for cross-community groups of young people was shot dead at home by Loyalist Paramilitaries on 29 June 1973 – he had just returned from his honeymoon.

On 12 November 1974 Michael Brennan, a teacher and voluntary youth worker, was shot dead by the Protestant Action Group (an off-shoot of the UVF) outside St Mary Youth Centre in Rosetta, Belfast.

Nicholas White (who had been a British soldier) was shot dead by the IRA on the 13th March 1976 while unlocking the gates of the youth club he was working in – he was reported to have been running a cross-community disco at the time¹².

The impact of the Troubles on young people was not confined to physical injury or loss of life. Marie Smyth (1998) documented the range of ways in which the conflict affected children and young people: deprivation levels, family life, leisure, abuse, trauma and the negative coping strategies that they employed on occasion to deal with these.

Whilst not all young people faced the same risk factors it would be inaccurate to state that they were unaffected by the conflict. At the very lowest level the heavy security presence (including a city centre curfew) had a negative impact upon the range of social opportunities that were available. As has been illustrated, the ‘normalisation’ of division meant that, irrespective of class or location, young Protestants and Catholics attended different schools (and studied

¹² “An Index of Deaths from the Conflict in Ireland” <http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/chron/index.html>

different subjects there), celebrated different holidays and played different sports. This was recognised by the Core Curriculum Working Group of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland:

“While many children and young people may not experience directly the effects of the current situation in Northern Ireland it would be extremely difficult to argue that they are not all indirectly affected in some way. The present generation have grown up in a society of conflict and tension, in an abnormal situation. The divisions of this society touch them all, because automatically they are categorised into two major groupings with differential experiences.”¹³

On the few occasions where contact did occur such interactions were controlled by a set of unspoken social codes and guidelines shared by both parties in order to avoid the possibility of coming into open conflict. In such a climate it was remarkably straightforward, perhaps inevitable, that each side could construct and maintain a stereotype image of the other-side. In the absence of cross community friendship (or in many instances even acquaintances from ‘the other side’) the dominant stereotypes supported by one side of the other could go unchallenged. Thus an unspoken *social apartheid* was created and maintained with a veil of polite avoidance.

This is consistent with behaviours observed by psychologists in other conflict situations:

“Groups in conflict tend to avoid each other. If this is not possible then intergroup norms develop which regulate interactions. Especially where two groups in conflict have a long history of mutual relations then normative behavioural responses will have developed over the years aimed at avoiding conflict.”¹⁴

This behaviour has been defined as “social grammar”¹⁵; that people in Northern Ireland tended to avoid talking about the issues of religion and politics when in (religiously) mixed company; broaching such issues would be considered ‘impolite’.

“As intergroup anxiety increases norms will be followed in more rigid and exaggerated ways. For example, if the norms prescribe politeness then individuals will tend to become more polite as they become more anxious”¹⁶

¹³ YCNI 1992

¹⁴ Cairns 1994

¹⁵ Gallagher 2003

¹⁶ Cairns 1994

Thus, even on the few occasions when people did engage in activities across the community divide, they could remain largely ignorant of each other's views on fundamental issues.

Put simply, if youth work was to address the conflict in any meaningful way then practice needed to be developed that not only forged links between communities *but also* created an environment within which dialogue could take place around difficult sensitive and contentious. This was to be done in the face of real and tangible risk to the safety of those prepared to engage in such programmes.

Approaches to Peace Building And Community Relations Through Youth Work

Mari Fitzduff proposed that, in a divided society in the midst of a violent conflict, two main approaches were possible:

1. Try to ignore the divisions, both communal and personal, and hope that when a political solution is eventually agreed upon this in itself will be sufficient to ease and develop the bonds between communities. .
2. Actively seek to address the divisions – as long as physical and mental separation exists between communities, fears and misunderstanding about each other's ultimate intentions will continue and will thus make the achievement of any agreed political solutions between the communities even more difficult¹⁷.

In the early years of the conflict a number of voluntary reconciliation organisations took this second approach. Initially their efforts at bringing children and young people together were concentrated on organising shared holidays (often away from Northern Ireland) for children and young people from the two dominant communities. There was a basic assumption that:

- Hope for the future lay with the younger generations – they had 'plastic minds' that had been relatively untainted by the prejudices of their elders. Community relations work with adults with hardened attitudes was unlikely to show any rewards.

¹⁷ Fitzduff 1996

- In a climate where opportunities for cross community contact were severely limited *any* contact was beneficial in order to maintain some sort of relationship between the communities in the midst of the conflict.
- Young people would only feel liberated enough to engage properly with the other side if they were at a physical (and emotional) distance from their home environs, the potentially negative influence of community/family prejudice and the threat of violence.

The majority of the early programmes relied on the assumed effectiveness of contact in changing attitudes and behaviour. Subsequent research showed that the simple equation “*increased contact = improved inter-community relationships*” does not add up; “stereotypic beliefs show considerable inertia in responding to discrepant information”.¹⁸ Thus, whilst cross community contact had potential to challenge the negative stereotypes held by individual young people, the dominant community attitude that ‘all Protestants/Catholics are bad’ remained stubbornly unaffected by that one person’s experience. It was consequently difficult for the young person to accept that his/her community was wholly wrong – they were in a state of cognitive dissonance. Their stereotype was therefore revised to recognise that whilst there are some good Catholics/Protestants most Catholics/Protestants are still bad.

It was not enough therefore for CR work to merely to create an opportunity to meet the other side. If attitudes were to be changed then the cognitive dissonance had to be sustained - the pervasive stereotype had to be directly and repeatedly challenged¹⁹. Johnston McMaster wrote that:

“For contact to successfully disconfirm key stereotypic beliefs it not only has to involve intergroup contact, it must also involve intergroup contact with a member or members of the outgroup who are prototypical in all respects with the exception of the one key factor to be disconfirmed. In addition the contact should take place over a long period of time and in order for the specific disconfirming stereotyped behaviour or belief to be expressed the contact should optimally take place under highly structured conditions in which the interactions may need to be loosely scripted.”²⁰

¹⁸ Cairns 1994

¹⁹ Barker 2003

²⁰ McMaster 1993

More-over McMaster observed that the polite avoidance described previously could permeate into youth work and lead to a circumnavigation of the difficult issues of history, religion and politics. An apparently “non-sectarian” stance could effectively reinforce prejudice by not raising relevant historical and political issues:

“Neutrality is an illusion and a dangerous myth. Not to challenge sectarianism by neutral silence is to endorse and allow it to continue and even flourish. Silence supports sectarianism and is a pro-sectarian stance”²¹.

Ultimately while activity sessions bringing two groups of young people together may have some benefit in establishing a long term cross-community programme, such work would only produce long term change if attitudes were challenged and greater understanding of the other side was developed. Indeed, simply bringing young people together and hoping they would become friends could even reinforce prejudices should they have a bad experience of meeting ‘the other side’.

“Not all contact is of the same quality or produces positive results. It needs to be well planned and thought through... and if it is not can actually be counter-productive. It should be remembered that people in Northern Ireland are regularly in ‘contact’ with each other – at work, shopping, at the hospital... however such contact has not yet led to significant changes in attitudes and prejudices.”²²

This thinking lead to Ann Dickson and Michael Doherty declaring that the purpose of cross-community youth work was:

“To explore through discussion, participants’ attitudes and identity: building up trust and understanding and empowering people to challenge injustice and violence. The ultimate reason in investing time in such group work, is not only for all the participants’ personal development, but the hope that they are doing something to foster better community relations in some measure, working towards an end of the conflict in Northern Ireland.”²³

²¹ Ibid

²² YCNI 1992

²³ Dickson and Doherty 1993

Youth Work In a Time of Conflict (1974-87)

The British Army had been welcomed as saviours upon their arrival on the streets of Northern Ireland in August 1969 but that perception began to change very quickly. On 11th October 1969 the army shot dead two Protestant civilians during rioting on the Shankill Road and the first RUC officer to be killed in the Troubles was shot by the UVF. In February 1971 the first British soldier to die in the troubles was shot dead by the IRA.

The violence intensified and internment without trial was introduced on 9th August 1971; 350 people were arrested and interned. The protests that took place in the following 48 hours claimed 17 lives, including ten civilians.

On 30 January 1972, a Civil Rights march from Belfast to Derry descended into rioting and, on what became known around the world as “Bloody Sunday”, thirteen unarmed civilians were shot dead by the members of the Parachute Regiment.

By the start of 1974 nearly 1,000 people had lost their lives in the conflict and as many as 15,000 families (mostly Catholic) had fled their homes²⁴. The Stormont Government had been dissolved and direct rule had been imposed from Westminster (in March 1972). Many of the institutions of the NI state had been dismantled. The County Education Boards were stood down under the 1972 Education & Libraries Order (NI) and replaced by five Education and Library Boards. These new Boards were given statutory responsibility for ensuring an “adequate youth service”.

The following 13 years saw intermittent escalations and reductions in the intensity of the violence as various political and military approaches were tried and failed. A further 1,800 people died in the conflict in this period. There were almost daily incidents of civil unrest, bomb attacks on shops, pubs and/or security force personnel or tit-for-tat sectarian murders.

A security cordon had been erected around Belfast City Centre. Steel gates prevented private vehicles from entering the central commercial zone. Pedestrian access was limited to a small number of permanently-manned entrances where civilians would be searched before being allowed into the zone. Customers could expect to be searched again before being allowed into

²⁴ Smyth 1998

shops. Elsewhere army patrols regularly stopped and searched vehicles on country roads and major thoroughfares.

The number of Troubles-related deaths fell-off after 1976. A series of temporary cease-fires and largely covert negotiations between politicians and paramilitaries contributed to limiting the annual death-toll to around 100 per year. It appeared that “an acceptable level of violence”ⁱⁱ had been attained. David McKittrick in the Independent newspaper wrote of the situation that “familiarity has bred acceptance and the abnormal is now accepted as the norm”²⁵.

In spite of the very real challenges and risks to their physical safety many individual youth and community workers and many organisations working with young people decided to take positive action to try to improve community relations and to engage in reconciliation. These early interventions were often funded from international sources, community collections or by philanthropists who reacted to the situation that was unfolding on the nightly TV news reports by putting their hands into their pockets. Their intentions were worthy but sometimes lacking any great understanding of the complexity of the situation or, in the absence of any reliable research, the nature of what amounted to effective practice. One youth work practitioner told me:

There was no guide book back then, no models of best practice to work from. We were just doing our best to maintain some kind of order when it seemed like this place was going to hell.

A principle early innovator in community relations work with young people in NI was John Malone, a headmaster. In 1970 Malone took a secondment from his post in Orangefield School in order to establish the “Schools Project in Community Relations” which is now widely recognised as the first education and community relations programme to be supported with public funds. The project aimed to support 13-16 year olds to adopt *a considerate style of life* and was led by a small team of Field Workers who delivered workshops with young people to explore interpersonal and group relationships, conflict and division with local and international perspectives²⁶.

²⁵ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/belfast-security-measures-accepted-as-normal-people-in-belfast-have-become-accustomed-to-police-checks-and-the-ring-of-steel-which-protects-the-citys-commercial-heart-david-mckittrick-reports-1562036.html>

²⁶ Malone 1972; referenced by Gallagher 2014

Malone's programme was essentially a curriculum development project, with some elements of joint school activities and cross-community meetings. He had plans for the production of curriculum support materials, but the funds for these were not, in the end, made available and his vision was cast to one side by the authorities. Maurice Hayes (a senior civil servant at the time) said that "his pioneering work was disgracefully ignored by the sceptical and non-practicing pundits in the Ministry of Education"²⁷

In 1976 a group called All Children Together (ACT) published a paper with proposals for the shared management of schools in Northern Ireland; this paper suggested a model for integrating existing schools alongside the development of a curriculum to promote "a common pattern of religious and moral education, and of historical and cultural studies". The 1978 Education (N.I.) Act encapsulated ACT's proposals and in 1981 Lagan College was established as the first Independent Integrated School.

Lagan College's arrival on the scene was soon followed by a ground-breaking declaration from the Department of Education. The DENI Circular 1982/21, *The Improvement of Community Relations: The Contribution of Schools*, stated that:

Every teacher, every school manager, Board member and trustee, and every educational administrator within the system has a responsibility for helping children to learn to understand and respect each other, and their differing customs and traditions, and of preparing them to live together in harmony in adult life²⁸.

Youth Work had been identified as an educational intervention in the 1972 Order - it was therefore similarly required to contribute to the improvement of Community Relations.

In 1987 a Cross-Community Contact Scheme administered directly by DENI was introduced to provide funding to promote links between Catholic and Protestant schools and youth groups. The scheme provided generous funding for transport, entrance charges and joint residential activities. Later that same year the "The Policy for the Youth Service" was launched by Dr Brian Mawhinney (a Conservative MP and Junior Minister in the Northern Ireland Office who had grown up and been educated in Northern Ireland). The *Blue Book* outlined a youth service curriculum that included a requirement for youth groups to:

²⁷ Cited in Richardson and Gallagher 2011

²⁸ DENI 1982

“Promote greater understanding of a society with diverse traditions and approaches and willingness to communicate positively with it”²⁹

Community relations work had moved from being a marginal activity to a core element within youth work in Northern Ireland.

The Path to Peace (1988-98)

By the end of the 80’s a whole generation of children had grown up knowing nothing but the conflict. A baby born in the weeks leading up to the arrival of British army onto the streets of NI would have reached the age of majority and have been eligible to vote in the General election of June 1987. Between 1988 and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 a further 650 individuals were to lose their lives, and countless more were to be left permanently maimed or scarred by the on-going violence³⁰.

For the Youth Service the out-workings of the Blue Book began to impact upon in earnest. Community relations within the youth work profession had been moved to centre stage. Every youth worker was obliged to engage in CR work.

“In 1987 the publication of ‘Policy for the Youth Service in Northern Ireland’ placed community relations firmly on the youth work agenda. One of the main objectives of the youth service was said to be to ‘promote greater understanding of a society with diverse traditions by engaging where at all possible in programmes where there is a strong cross-community involvement’ and youth workers were required to include cross-community work in their programmes.” Core Curriculum Working Group³¹

In September 1992 the Youth Council for NI produced a resource pack on community relations work – the pack was published as a triptych and included:

1. Community Relations Guidelines
2. The Community Relations Youth Service Support Scheme (CRYSSS)ⁱⁱⁱ funding arrangements

²⁹ DENI 1987

³⁰ Fay, Morrissey and Smith 1998 & 1999

³¹ YCNI 1992

3. 'Directory of Help in Community Relations'

Responsibility for the management of the Cross-Community Contact Scheme that had been set up in 1987 was handed to the Education and Library Boards; the Department of Education (DENI) would henceforth provide the Boards with an annual 'ring-fenced' budget to promote and support the development of Community Relations. The Boards' Youth Sections were to manage these funds in order to provide training and monies to support contact programmes for schools and youth groups. The Youth Council for NI (YCNI) was given responsibility for the funding of regional voluntary youth organisations (RVYOs) and DENI would henceforth provide direct financial support to those organisations with an explicit CR focus that could provide external advice and guidance to schools and youth groups availing of other funds – the Core Funding Scheme.

In the meantime, schools had been endeavouring to interpret and apply the requirement contained in the 1982 DENI Circular that they *actively contribute* to the improvement of community relations. The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 introduced the cross curricular theme Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) which was to be delivered by all schools in Northern Ireland. In 1992 Alan Smith and Alan Robinson conducted a review of the impact of EMU and observed that teachers were not confident that they had the necessary skills to handle the community relations aspects of EMU. They recommended training for teachers and better co-ordination between agencies – including the youth service. The "Speak your Piece" project responded to this need and in 1995 engaged 20 youth workers and teachers from 20 schools in a project to share skills and develop methods and processes for effective engagement with controversial issues³².

Elsewhere in the world the twin policies of Perestroika and Glasnost (Restructuring and Openness) instigated in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985-86 led ultimately to the breaching of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War. In June 1989 images of a lone protestor in Tiananmen Square, Beijing facing down a column of tanks appeared on international TV screens.

As the two global political monoliths of state communism and capitalism found rapprochement, the world's diplomats were able to turn their attention to the resolution of other conflicts. On

³² Smith et al 1996

11th Feb 1990 Nelson Mandela was released from prison and on 27 April 1994 South Africa held its first free election.

In a massively symbolic gesture the US President, Bill Clinton, switched on the Belfast Christmas lights in 1995. He was accompanied by two children – one Protestant and one Catholic. The following year the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) was established by the British and Irish Governments to promote “economic and social advance”, and to encourage “contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists”³³. The IFI was financed with sizeable contributions from the United States of America, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

US senator George Mitchell arrived in Northern Ireland to chair multi-party peace talks and in July 1997 the IRA announced a cease-fire. After months of discussion and painstaking negotiation a peace settlement (the Belfast Agreement) was reached on 10th April 1998; Good Friday. The Agreement document was circulated to every household and the overwhelming majority of the people of Ireland (north and south) endorsed it in a referendum held on 23rd May 1998.³⁴

Among the commitments to political and structural reform contained in the Agreement there was recognition of the need to create "a culture of tolerance at every level of society" and a pledge "to facilitate and encourage integrated education". It also included a clause that placed a general duty on all public bodies to “pay due regard” to the promotion of equality – the clause became known as Section 75.³⁵

In 1997 the NI youth work curriculum was revised, revamped and re-launched as “Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice”. Again Community Relations was afforded prominence both as a discrete programme area and implicitly within the Core Principles; one of which advocated ‘the promotion of acceptance and understanding of others’.³⁶

That same year Karin Eyben, Duncan Morrow and Derick Wilson proposed that, in order for community relations work to be effective, it needed to be underpinned by the three interrelated

³³ <http://www.internationalfundforireland.com/about-the-fund>

³⁴ The Agreement

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/136652/agreement.pdf

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ <http://www.youthworkni.org.uk/curriculum/>

values of equity^{iv}, diversity^v and interdependence^{vi}. These values came to be known collectively as EDI and were to have a profound influence on how community relations policy and practice was to develop.³⁷

In 1998, following a major youth work conference in Malahide (just outside Dublin), the Causeway Programme was launched to support youth exchanges: North/South within Ireland and between the UK and Ireland.

Heartbreakingly, for all the optimism that accompanied the Good Friday Agreement, not everyone was on-board. On Saturday 15th August 1998 the Real IRA (a group that was opposed to the peace process and had broken away from the Republican leadership) set off a car bomb in the centre of Omagh. In the single bloodiest action in the history of the conflict 29 people died and over 220 were injured. The dead included a woman pregnant with twins and two young people from Spain; participants on an exchange trip. The horror of the carnage resonated around the globe.

Post-Conflict Community Relations (1999-2015)

In 1999 eight civilians were killed in political violence in NI, the lowest figure since the troubles began, and the first year that no security forces had died in the conflict³⁸. The following years showed a small rise in fatalities but, in July 2005, the IRA declared an end to its armed struggle and two months later an international decommissioning body announced that they had destroyed all of their weapons. The loyalist paramilitaries took longer to decommission: the UVF officially put their arms ‘verifiably beyond use’ in June 2009 and the UDA followed suit in January 2010. In 2010 there were no reported deaths due to the activity of either the security forces or paramilitary groups. These headline figures concealed an ongoing level of violence perpetrated by paramilitaries through punishment attacks, beatings and shootings in their self-assigned role as community protectors upholding their interpretation of law and order in the areas under their control.

Up to the end of 1999 police statistics show there have been 2,241 shootings and 1,560 beatings since the figures were first recorded. These statistics, however, are thought to

³⁷ Eyben, Morrow and Wilson 1997

³⁸ Fay, Morrissey & Smyth 1998

under-estimate the true extent of the problem. Those subjected to beatings and shootings are fearful of involving the security forces in case of paramilitary reprisal and hence there is large scale under-reporting.³⁹

The early years of the 21st Century saw rapid economic, social, political and cultural change in NI and beyond. South of the border from 1995 to 2008 the Republic of Ireland enjoyed an unprecedented period of rapid economic growth that became known as the Celtic Tiger. Northern Ireland experienced its own Peace Dividend as investors that had previously shied away the war-torn province saw opportunities to make money. An attendant boom in property prices and investment in infrastructure meant that the construction industry was able to offer a great many new jobs.

There had been very low levels of migration into Northern Ireland during the period of the Troubles. The onset of peace changed that. Portuguese workers were amongst the first to arrive in 2000, attracted to the agricultural industry, and nurses were recruited from India and Philippines to fill empty posts in the NHS⁴⁰. In 2004 the European Union expanded to include former nations from the Eastern Bloc (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) and again in 2007 (Romania and Bulgaria). Many young skilled people from Eastern Europe availed of the lifting of travel and employment restrictions to ply their trade in Belfast, Dungannon, Craigavon and elsewhere.

The economy stalled and crashed in 2008. As the availability of work fluctuated, some people left, some stayed and others came. Between July 2000 and June 2010, an estimated 122,000 international long-term migrants arrived in Northern Ireland, while 97,000 left⁴¹. The traditionally socially conservative population were obliged to accept, if not actively embrace, an increasingly diverse community.

In many ways the contribution that the new arrivals brought to Northern Ireland was overshadowed by increased levels of intolerance demonstrated by a few and played out for all to see in the local, national and international media. In 2004 Northern Ireland was dubbed the “Race-hate Capital of Europe”⁴² following the publication of PSNI statistics showing an increase in racist crimes including graffiti, verbal abuse and physical attacks. “The Next

³⁹ Knox & Monaghan 2001

⁴⁰ Eaton 2007

⁴¹ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2012/general/3112.pdf>

⁴² BBC News 13 Jan 2004 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/3390249.stm

Stephen Lawrence?”⁴³ was published further highlighting an emerging problem by detailing the stories of 162 victims and survivors of racist violence across Northern Ireland. In 2014 the Belfast Telegraph reported that two racist attacks were taking place every day⁴⁴.

It was not just the ethnic profile that was changing. In December 2005 Belfast City Hall saw the first same-sex civil partnership (only the second in the UK) – it is notable that, whilst the authorities in GB and the Republic of Ireland have subsequently gone on to accept gay marriage, progress with regard to LGBT emancipation in NI has stalled.

Notwithstanding these significant changes, three decades of conflict and hundreds of years of division in Ireland could not easily be consigned to the past. At a conference in Belfast the peace-builder and scholar John Paul Lederach said that “*it takes as long to get out of a conflict as long as it did to get into it*”. One wag in the audience asked if he meant thirty years or three hundred years. Lederach just shrugged and gave a wry, apologetic smile.

In 2000 the Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence (JEDI) youth work initiative was launched by Minister of Education with a vision to:

To increase the ability and confidence of youth organisations and young people to be at ease with difference, acknowledge one another as equals and promote improved relations between all.⁴⁵

JEDI aimed to develop and implement sustainable models for embedding, monitoring and quality assuring the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence throughout the youth sector. To do this a base-line audit was conducted in 2001⁴⁶ and a programme of organisational policy and practice review was initiated. The process was supported by a “Step by Step Guide for Policy Development” and “Reflection on Practice for Practitioners” document which were published in 2002. At the same time the Department of Education commenced a review of the Schools and Youth Service community relations programmes. Over the following years the JEDI Training Group facilitated a series of residential conferences and developed a range of

⁴³ McVeigh & Dúchán 2006

⁴⁴ Belfast Telegraph 21 April 2014 <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/two-racist-attacks-every-day-in-northern-irelands-racehate-crime-surge-30202329.html>

⁴⁵ <http://www.yeni.org/partnerships/jedi/jedi.html>

⁴⁶ Regional Development Partnership “An Audit of Community Relations and Education for Citizenship within Youth Work in Northern Ireland” available at www.jedi.com

accredited packages which were mainstreamed into Youth Work Training Board suite in 2008.

These courses included:

- OCN Level 1 Good Relations and Diversity Programme for Young People
- OCN Level 2 Introduction to CR/EDI
- OCN Level 3 CR/EDI Programme Development
- OCN Level 3 CR/EDI for advanced practitioners
- Level 5 EDI Strategic Planning Award (for Managers)^{vii}

In 2003 and 2004 young people were supported through JEDI to participate in consultation on the Stormont Government's Community Relations Strategy (Shared Future) and to engage directly with politicians on Community Relations issues. The ethos of JEDI was woven into the 2003 Youth Service curriculum document, "A Model for Effective Practice", which was revised specifically to place the values of equity, diversity and interdependence (EDI) at its very core.

In the wake of the Belfast Agreement the youth service was able to access regeneration (AKA 'Peace') funds from the European Union. Whilst many youth groups benefitted from relatively small grants awarded by local partnerships for local projects, there were a few larger initiatives:

1. The Youth Education Social Inclusion Partnership (YESIP) brought together 10 key players from both the formal and non-formal Education sectors alongside the Southern ELB as the lead partner and Youthnet as the Delivery partner. YESIP supported 10 innovative projects working with young people to address two key priorities: Reconciling Communities and Contributing to a Shared Society.
2. The Youth Work in Contested Spaces initiative was established in 2003 as a partnership between The University of Ulster, The Youth Council for Northern Ireland and Public Achievement Northern Ireland. This project set out to build the capacity of the youth work community in Northern Ireland and to contribute to international best practice, particularly in preparing young people for life in a divided and contested society⁴⁷. A central part of this project was a series of conferences that brought together an international group of youth work practitioners, managers, academics and young people

⁴⁷ Harland 2009

to develop collaborative relationships and thinking around theory and practice of conflict and division around the world. The last of these conferences took place in Corrymeela in 2006 and concluded in the production of a book written by the participants on the programme. It provided insights into policy, context and practice – these were illustrated through personal stories of youth work from contested societies around the world.⁴⁸

3. NcompasS was a cross border programme that operated from 2003 to 2008 for formal and non-formal educational organisations. It was a partnership between the British Council in Belfast and Léargas in Dublin. The programme provided training for teachers and youth leaders and financial support for exchanges that were designed to promote peace and reconciliation while also addressing issues of social exclusion and disadvantage.

The enduring peace had many, many undoubted benefits but progress meant that the policies and initiatives that had been devised by DENI in the midst of conflict were becoming increasingly anachronistic. In 2008 the Minister for Education initiated a working group to review the Community Relations policy in formal and non-formal education. The policy review took place at a time of increasing financial pressure. The global financial crash of 2008 had tightened the flow of money into NI and many philanthropists who had previously been keen to support reconciliation work turned their attention closer to home.

The two political parties sharing power in the Stormont executive (the Democratic Unionists and Sinn Féin) inhabited the far ends of the Unionist-Nationalist spectrum and neither was particularly effusive in their support of community relations principles – preferring a one-for-you-one-for-me approach. In the lead up to the 2011 Assembly election a total withdrawal of Community Relations funding from the ELBs and YCNI had seemed likely. In the event the Core Funding Scheme was withdrawn causing much hardship to several groups – a number of which ultimately went to the wall – and the funds available to ELBs and YCNI were reduced by over 60%.

⁴⁸ Magnuson and Baizerman Eds. 2007

In 2011 DENI published the “Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy”⁴⁹. This new policy drew on Section 75 (the Equality Clause of the 1998 Belfast Agreement) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and was specifically designed to sit comfortably with the schools and youth work curricula and other education policy initiatives. The policy moved away from the concept of *tolerance* – it was no longer enough to simply put up with those who were different. The term *Single Identity* that had become widely adopted was assiduously avoided.

CRED was, at its core, about recognising all the multifarious aspects of identity rather than lumping everyone from one community together into some convenient, common catch-all. It was notable however that, whilst CRED drew on the established principles of EDI, the notion of *equity* with its intrinsic tenet of fairness had been replaced with the concept of *equality*. *Interdependence* had been dropped altogether. These revisions made the policy more palatable to the two ruling parties.

All schools and youth groups receiving government funds (directly through DENI or indirectly through CCMS, YCNI or ELBs) were henceforth obliged to deliver their services with due regard to this new policy. To support that process a new common funding scheme for youth and schools was introduced: the CRED Enhancement Scheme.

The Stormont Government nevertheless struggled to introduce its own Community Relations Policy. In 2005 the Shared Future consultation⁵⁰ was introduced with the aim of formulating a policy document to address community divisions, segregation, and sectarianism in Northern Ireland. The resulting document raised concerns around the polarisation of Northern Ireland and advocated “sharing over separation” and “cultural variety”. The proposals arising from the document did not gather the required cross party support and a policy hiatus ensued.

Following pressure from the US and UK governments in the wake of civil unrest precipitated by the removal of the Union Flag from permanent display outside the city hall in Belfast “Together: Building a United Community” was published in May 2013⁵¹. The strategy undertook to remove peace walls, support shared housing and shared education, promote cross-community sport, initiate a citizenship/employability training programme and provide cross-

⁴⁹ <http://credni.open.wp-dev.web.tibus.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CRED-Policy-March-2011-English-PDF.pdf>

⁵⁰ CRU Shared Future consultation: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/community/cru03.htm>

⁵¹ Statement from OFMDFM: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/executive-statements/statement-090513-together-building.htm>

community summer camps. A commitment to Integrated Education that had been included in the Belfast Agreement fell by the wayside.

In November 2014, the Northern Ireland Executive proposed budget cuts to the CRED Enhancement scheme and instructed the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) – the extent of these cuts were to be subject to the outcomes of an evaluation of the impact of the CRED policy. The Inspectors visited thirty-two visits to schools and youth organisation and met with 13 voluntary youth organisations – meetings also took place with young people, professionals and support organisations, and an on-line survey was conducted.

The resulting report was in many respects a resounding validation of the engagement of the youth service with the CRED policy and an endorsement of the practice developed

The YCNI provides appropriate support, guidance and challenge for voluntary organisations in the development of CRED practice. This includes clear strategic development of CRED, through well-planned information days, to share practice and build capacity amongst staff, high quality resources and effective links with external partners. Uniformed organisations evaluate well the outcomes for young people to inform next steps.⁵²

Whilst recognising the work carried out by the Regional Voluntary Youth Organisations, the ETI report also called for further support for the expansion and embedding of CRED through the dissemination of good practice and the ongoing development of training, mentoring and programmes for an even wider range of young people.

The report concluded:

Given the continued segregated system of education and the widening equality issues across society, there are examples of sector-leading CRED practice in schools and youth organisations which are ahead of some of the views expressed within society. More remains to be done collaboratively, however, to enable schools and youth organisations to prepare young people better for the diverse world of life and work.⁵³

⁵² ETI (2015) “An evaluation of the impact of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy in schools and youth organisations” <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/an-evaluation-of-the-impact-of-the-cred-policy-in-schools-and-youth-organisations.pdf>

⁵³ Ibid

In spite of this assessment by ETI, the ring-fencing of future CRED funding was withdrawn by DENI in March 2015. At the same time the ELBs were stood down and replaced with the Education Authority. Those officers and youth workers that had been funded to support the implementation of the CRED policy were re-assigned. The Interboard CRED Panel had already been stood down in December 2014. With effect from March 2015 there were no expert youth workers or officers employed in the statutory sector specifically to support the improvement of community relations.

Youth Work, Cross Community, Community Relations and Reconciliation Organisations

Over the last forty years a number of organisations working with young people came into being extemporaneously, often as a community response to atrocity. Only a few of these groups were robust enough to become sustainable in the longer term. My space here is limited and it is impossible to document all such grassroots initiatives. I have therefore focused on those groups that have had the most enduring presence. Most of these organisations have recorded their history on published documents or websites – these provide a much fuller and richer account and pay due respect to the many individuals who contributed so much to their development. My words here can only be a sketch. I encourage you to visit the original sources to find out more and acknowledge the courage of those who have worked for peace.

Reconciliation Organisations

The Corrymeela Community⁵⁴

Corrymeela has been in many ways at the heart of efforts to promote and facilitate inter-community reconciliation in Northern Ireland since before the troubles even began. There can be few community relations practitioners that have not passed through the centre at Ballycastle at some stage and many can trace their first cross-community encounter back to Corrymeela. The founder of Corrymeela, Ray Davey, had a similar charismatic presence as the youth work pioneers described earlier in this chapter. Davey was an ordained Presbyterian minister who served as a YMCA Chaplain during the Second World War. He was captured in North Africa

⁵⁴ <http://www.corrymeela.org/>

and held in Dresden as a prisoner of war where he witnessed first-hand the allied bombing of the city in early 1945, when up to 25,000 were killed. The experience affected him deeply and changed him profoundly.

After the war, Davey was appointed the first Presbyterian Dean of Residence at Queen's University. He became concerned at the sectarian tensions that were brewing in Northern Ireland during the 60s and, inspired by the Agape community, sought to establish an "open village where all people of good will" could come together and learn to live in community.

In 1965 a group of Queen's students with Davey at the helm purchased a wooden Dutch-style holiday house, "Corrymeela", on the North Antrim coast not far from Ballycastle. The house was officially opened on October 30, 1965 as a place of gathering, work, faith and discussion; bringing people of different backgrounds, different political and religious beliefs and different identities together. Corrymeela's work reached out to communities, family, schools and youth groups.

In 1971, as the work of Corrymeela expanded and became ever more ambitious and complex, an additional property was rented from Queen's University; in Lower Crescent, Belfast. The Belfast centre served both as an office base and as a neutral location; a drop-in centre where work commenced with youth groups in Ballycastle could be continued. Corrymeela continued to facilitate the meeting of young people across the divide right through the height of the Troubles.

On one occasion a group there had to make a hasty exit when they were threatened by a Tartan gang outside - the group managed to exit while the gang were going to get reinforcements⁵⁵.

Sometime around 1981 a room was built at the back of the Belfast office specifically for youth work. It had a stereo, cushions and its own entrance from the entry. Billy Kane was a key player in the development of youth programmes:

During those times working across divides was not easy but it drove us because it meant a lot to us even though it was dangerous at times. I myself lost 7 young people that I worked with. Professor Tom Lovett carried out a lot of cross community work, and he

⁵⁵ Non-violent News 224, November 2014

<http://corrymeela.028ni.org.uk/joomla16/phocadownload/General/corrymeela%20house%20tribute.pdf>

had a radio programme on BBC NI called “Them and Us” and it was on air on a Tuesday night at 7 pm. I had been working with young people from many of the housing estates around Belfast, Rathcoole, Twinbrook, Shankill, Falls, Ballymurphy, Turf Lodge, East Belfast, Clonduff, The Village, to name a few. So every Tuesday two minibuses went around all these estates collecting young people to come to No.8 [Corrymeela House in Belfast] to listen to the radio programmes and discuss them in small groups. Every week there was more and more wanted to come. I discovered that no one cared about the programmes, it was the minibus trip and seeing where everyone lived and meeting together was important. Without knowing, I had broken down barriers for them and allowed them the chance to meet across the divide.⁵⁶

In the early 1980s Billy set-up the “Resource Group” project – recruiting 18 to 25 year-olds from those groups of young people who had previously participated in residential programmes in Corrymeela. One participant explained the process:

Billy or Derick [Wilson] would invite you to join the group. You had to commit to six full weekends over the course of the year. Each weekend had a theme: Life Maps, Politics, Community, Conflict etc. Alongside the training you had to plan an activity with young people in your own community based on what you had learnt and, at the end of it all, there was a week away learning about how other places coped with diversity and conflict. We went to Germany. Many of us went on to sign up for a full-time volunteering role in the centre afterwards.

In 1981 Corrymeela co-organised with the Glenree Reconciliation Centre in Co Wicklow a major conference on ‘Models of Political Cooperation’ with the conference material also providing the basis of a book with the same title; the reflections that came from this conference pointed the way to the kind of arrangements and agreements that eventually found voice in the Good Friday Agreement.

Harmony Community Trust and Glebe House ⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ <http://www.glebehouseni.com/>

In 1971 the Northern Ireland Group of International Voluntary Service (IVS) UK, started a programme of cross-community holidays for children from Belfast and Derry. IVS was a branch of an international peace organisation, Service Civil International (SCI) that had been founded after the First World War. By 1972 the Northern Ireland group, in cooperation with the Irish Branch of SCI, had developed a full programme of holidays for young people from deprived and divided communities. That year 360 children from those areas where violence and the effects of the “Troubles” had been greatest, were taken on holiday to England, Scotland, France, Holland, and the Republic of Ireland.

IVS recognised the limited potential of their holiday schemes to achieve their goals of peace and reconciliation and felt the need to work with the children and community groups in a permanent centre in Northern Ireland, on a year round basis.

The idea of purchasing a house and setting up a permanent children’s centre was mooted in 1973, but lack of funds was a major barrier. Dr Hylda Armstrong, the mother of Sean Armstrong (IVS Coordinator - who had been shot dead in 1973) was the International President of Inner Wheel of the Rotary Club. She knew that Rotarians were thinking along similar lines – they had been funding holidays for children and young people and were keen that a permanent, local centre for peace and reconciliation should be established. Dr Armstrong brought the Rotary Club and IVS together and Harmony Community Trust (HCT) was born.

After a protracted search throughout Northern Ireland, a former Church of Ireland Rectory was found in the Spring of 1975. ‘Glebe House’ was purchased with funds from Belfast Rotary and a loan from the Ulster Bank; HCT took possession of the property on 1st July 1975 and the first group of children arrived on the 13th July. In the subsequent years Glebe House has seen more than 20,000 children and young people from all sections of the community in Northern Ireland pass through its doors, as well as others from the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and further afield in Europe. Many of these children returned as volunteers, staff, committee members and parents of a new generation of children.

Much of the inspiration and drive behind the work of HCT has come from Helen Honeyman. Helen was one of the early pioneers of community relations work with young people through her work with IVS and the NI Adventure Playground Association at the onset of the troubles. Helen has remained true to her convictions and is still influential at the helm of the organisation:

At Harmony Community Trust, our optimism comes from over thirty years' experience of building trust, cooperation and respect: we believe that children, young people and adults don't have to be victims of history but can be agents of change.

The Peace People⁵⁸

The origins of the Peace People lay in deep personal tragedy:

Shortly after 2 p.m. on August 10th, 1976, an incident occurred in West Belfast, involving members of the I.R.A. and the British Army. A chase developed with soldiers on Land Rovers following a car driven by a young republican, Danny Lennon, with a passenger on board. The car was speeding down Finaghy Road North when the pursuing soldiers opened fire. Danny Lennon was shot dead. Anne (Corrigan) Maguire was wheeling a pram along the road. In the pram was six-weeks-old Andrew. Alongside, on her bicycle, was Anne's daughter Joanne, aged eight and a half, and her toddler son John, aged two and a half. A few yards further along was another son, seven-year-old Mark.

Suddenly, the car containing the dead Danny Lennon and his comrade swerved crazily and crashed through the family group and into the railings of St. John the Baptist school. Joanne and Andrew were killed instantly. John, medically dead was pronounced clinically dead in hospital the following day. Anne was severely injured, suffering leg and pelvic injuries, and brain bruising, and was unconscious for days.⁵⁹

This event sparked a series of "peace rallies" led by Mairead Corrigan (Anne's sister) and Betty Williams (who had witnessed the incident). Their rallies attracted large numbers of Protestants and Catholics who joined forces to campaign for peace. Corrigan and Williams linked up with a journalist, Ciaran McKeown, and the Community For Peace People came into being. In 1976 Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams were awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.

First Declaration of the Peace People stated:

⁵⁸ <http://www.peacepeople.com/>

⁵⁹ Adapted from content on <http://www.peacepeople.com/>

- We have a simple message to the world from this movement for Peace.
- We want to live and love and build a just and peaceful society.
- We want for our children, as we want for ourselves, our lives at home, at work, and at play to be lives of joy and Peace.
- We recognise that to build such a society demands dedication, hard work, and courage.
- We recognise that there are many problems in our society which are a source of conflict and violence.
- We recognise that every bullet fired and every exploding bomb make that work more difficult.
- We reject the use of the bomb and the bullet and all the techniques of violence.
- We dedicate ourselves to working with our neighbours, near and far, day in and day out, to build that peaceful society in which the tragedies we have known are a bad memory and a continuing warning

The youth-led Youth for Peace group grew out of the Peace People and was supported financially by a number of international donors and public funds. Their main objectives were: the establishment of a just and peaceful society in NI through non-violent means; the breaking down of the fear which leads to sectarianism; the creation of a dynamic people-politic; reform of the Justice/Security systems.

Although based in Belfast, Youth for Peace worked throughout the six counties and had also a centre in Coleraine. The organisation eventually developed six strands of work with young people (aged from 12 to 25) focused on peer education, outreach, residential camps and international programmes.

The profile of the Peace People enabled Youth for Peace to foster relationships with reconciliation organisations throughout the British Isles and around the world including: The Åland Islands Peace Institute and The Tim Parry Trust. They also engaged in exchanges with youth groups in Israel/Palestine, Germany, Austria, France and further afield.

Youth for Peace also facilitated workshops in schools and pioneered peer education community relations programmes addressing issues of identity, justice, politics, culture, history and non-violence.

The Spirit Of Enniskillen Trust

The IRA detonated a bomb in Enniskillen on Remembrance Sunday, 8 November 1987. The attack killed 11 people and, in the immediate aftermath, Northern Ireland prepared itself for a wave of retaliation from Loyalist paramilitaries. Uncharacteristically, the bombing did not trigger the expected tit-for-tat escalation. The reaction of Gordon Wilson, who lost his daughter Marie (aged 20) in the explosion, was widely regarded as having been pivotal in averting retaliatory violence. Only hours after his daughter's death, Gordon Wilson gave an interview to the BBC in which he said that he forgave the terrorists and would pray for them; he implored Loyalists not to attempt to exert revenge.

Inspired by the ideas of Gordon Wilson, the Spirit of Enniskillen Trust (SoE) was founded in 1989. SoE sought to both engage the energy, idealism and commitment of young people in order to build a shared, fair and diverse society in Northern Ireland *and* to broaden their perspectives of community conflict in NI and beyond.

The idea was to support young people aged between sixteen and nineteen from Northern Ireland to travel outside the Province and to use their experience to help build community bridges at home. It wasn't a traditional Holiday Scheme like those that had gone before – the selection process was rigorous and the participants undertook intense training before they left these shores. They were supported by expert youth workers and their adventure took them abroad to communities that were facing conflict of their own.

In its latter years, the Trust operated three programmes:

- Explore – International exchange and leadership
- Future Voices – Promoting volunteering and participation
- Together – Supporting the exploration of contentious inter-community issues in post-primary schools.

The Charity ran for over 20 years and won The Guardian UK Charity of the Year in 2011. It faced a significant crisis when DENI withdrew Core Funding for community relations voluntary organisations in 2010 and was wound up in 2013 in response to growing and unsustainable financial difficulties.

Youth Action North West

Following the publication of the ‘Policy for Youth Work’ the NI Association of Youth Clubs (later YouthAction) established a North-West support group the autumn of 1987. The group drew from a wide range of experience of work with young people in the North West to assess the implications of Dr. Mawhinney’s Blue Book. The issue of cross-community engagement was identified as having particular importance in the area. Youth Action North West recognised that, in spite of the long standing commitment to community relations work in Derry and its environs, sharing was not happening on any regular basis.

Michael Doherty was employed as Training and Development officer and, in conjunction with Corrymeela, helped to develop a Training Guidelines Manual. Michael took an avowedly anti-sectarian position that challenged the prevailing climate of non-sectarian practice. He developed a series of courses and workshops including: Mediation Skills, Conflict Management; Conflict Resolution; Policing; Prejudice Reduction.

Much of the learning from this project was distilled and included in “Life-Lines: A Youth Workers Handbook for Cross Community Work” which Michael wrote with Ann Dickson.⁶⁰

Cooperation North/ Cooperation Ireland⁶¹

Co-operation North (AKA Co-op North) was founded in 1979 by Irish businessman Brendan O'Regan with support from leaders in business, trades unions and academia from both sides of the border. The organisation aimed to:

“Change attitudes by promoting practical co-operation between the people of Ireland, North and South, so that people respect each other’s’ traditions and achieve greater levels of economic, social and cultural Co-operation.”

Co-op North provided a programme of training and support to those youth groups that had received funding through their Youth Links Exchange Programme to:

⁶⁰ Dickson and Doherty 1993

⁶¹ <http://www.cooperationireland.org/>

“Promote tolerance and understanding between young people from Unionist and Nationalist traditions within Northern Ireland and between NI and the Republic of Ireland by promoting and facilitating practical co-operation between those involved in the Youth Service.”

The organisation “made a heroic effort during the worst period of the troubles to generate north-south cooperation, but it was, for the most part, point-to-point, twin-pair, short-duration exchanges in relatively ‘soft’ areas”.⁶²

In the early 1990s Co-operation North became Co-operation Ireland and changed its practices - they moved from funding youth projects to direct delivery. In this new incarnation they have retained their traditionally high media profile and in June 2012 hosted the event at which the historic handshake between Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin and Queen Elizabeth II took place.

International Holiday Projects

The Troubles in Northern Ireland were widely covered by the international media. The rapid proliferation of colour televisions throughout the developed world in the 1970s meant that the events in Belfast and Derry were seen on screens in family homes far away from the emerald isle. It seemed to many onlookers that young people in Northern Ireland were both the victims and the guardians of ideologies and religious traditions that had been consigned to the past elsewhere – that they were caught in a cycle of unending violence whilst their counterparts in Europe and the United States were enjoying unprecedented wealth and freedom.

A wave of altruism swept through Northern Europe and the Irish diaspora in the United States. They wanted to do something; anything, to ease the lives of those children caught in the deteriorating situation that they saw unfolding on nightly news reports. The result was a string of holiday projects. These were of inconsistent quality – ranging from the well thought-through and professionally managed to the well-meaning but ill-conceived. Amongst the more enduring initiatives were the US based Project Children and The Ulster Project and holiday projects organised with groups in the Netherlands.

⁶² Pollack 2013

Project Children⁶³

Project Children was wound up in September 2014 after 40 years of bringing children from both sides of the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland to spend the summer with a family in the United States as a respite from violence of the Troubles. The organisation had been founded in 1975 by Denis Mulcahy, a member of the New York Police Department Bomb Squad. After watching news accounts of the violence in NI, the former Cork native reasoned that if Protestant and Catholic children could spend time together in an environment that was not toxic with war, they would be less likely as adults to hurl bombs at each other. That first summer, he and his wife Miriam brought six children, three Protestant and three Catholic, to spend the summer with them in their home in New York State. Over the years Project Children brought 22,000 children from Northern Ireland to spend the summer with 1,500 host families in the United States.

The project had been evaluated by Alan Smith and Dominic Murray (1993) – they noted the need for continuity of contact for the young participants on their return to Ireland and the misplaced assumption that only those from disadvantaged communities were affected by intolerance. The children’s project has been outlived by the organisation’s internship programme, where mature students are brought to the US during the summer to work and live. The organisation now uses its large network of co-ordinators and host families to provide valuable work experience in many fields ranging from law and politics, to medicine and engineering.

The Ulster Project⁶⁴

The Ulster Project was the brainchild of Reverend Stephen Kent Jacobson of the Episcopal Church in the US and the Rev. Kerry Waterstone, a Church of Ireland minister from Tullamore in the Republic of Ireland. Waterstone had been in Connecticut participating in a pastoral exchange programme with Jacobson. Together they recognised the potential that the United States held in providing a sanctuary where young people from Northern Ireland could distance themselves from the troubles and thereby create a space for conversations that would otherwise never happen. The concept was willingly embraced by both the Irish-American diaspora in

⁶³ <http://www.projectchildren.org/>

⁶⁴ www.ulsterproject.org

Manchester, Connecticut, and Protestant and Catholic clergy in Northern Ireland. The first six week programme took place in summer 1975 – financed by philanthropy and supported by a number of families prepared to open their homes to a complete stranger.

I was lucky enough to go on one of the early trips to USA with the Manchester [Connecticut] Project in 1977. There were about three dozen of us in total from Belfast, Portadown and Armagh - evenly divided 50:50 male/female and Protestant/Catholic – all around 15 years old. The project was all about leadership – we’d each been selected by our churches as having shown ‘potential’. We had about 10 meetings before-hand where we got to know each other and explored our identities.

The real lines of conflict weren’t about religion but about class – the Protestants were nearly all middle class, we came from the rougher side of town. It was hard to relate to the world they came from but it was even harder when we arrived in the States. We were hosted by families that to our eyes were unbelievably wealthy. It was such a shock – from the Garvaghy Road to Disneyland in one fell swoop! The standard of living was just so much better. I didn’t want to leave. I wanted to become an American.

Waterstone’s and Jacobson’s project inspired other cities and at one stage there were as many as 29 cities and 17 states hosting Northern Irish teenagers. As the peace process took hold the number of participating cities fell away and by 2009 had reduced to 19.

Current programmes are still ‘home hosted’ in line with the original model but the participant preparation, programme design, content and expected outcomes have been considerably revised over subsequent years. Programmes are now focused around the concept of ‘sharing experiences’ and include:

- Extensive 6 month preparation programmes
- Daily structured activity
- Trust building exercises
- Prejudice Reduction
- ‘Peace-building’ skills

The Ulster Project is still operating and, since its inception in 1975, has facilitated programmes with around 6,000 young participants from Northern Ireland.

Dutch and Other European Holiday Projects

A large number of political and church groups on the European mainland (particularly in the Netherlands) responded to the developing situation in Northern Ireland in the early '70s. The Dutch Northern Irish Advisory Committee for example was established in 1973 by educationalists, Churchmen and others in both Holland and Northern Ireland. The group arranged trips to Holland for community leaders (including youth workers) to allow them to learn from the ways in which problems resulting from religious and political differences had been tackled in the Netherlands. Hulp Noord Ierland (HUNI) and the affiliated Connection Europe on the other hand facilitated cross community and social education programmes for youth groups which combined group activities and home hosting with families in Holland and/or Sweden. The theory was that whilst the mixed group activities helped the young people to get to know each other better, the home hosting element would show participants the possibility of co-existence and a different way of living.

We went to Holland for two weeks around the time of the UWC strike [May 1974] there were 10 of us from each side from North and West Belfast... we were all around 12 or 13 years old. We were paired off with a partner from the other side and stayed with a host family – they took us places and did things with us but there was no structured programme. I can't remember us doing anything together to get to know each other before we left for Holland nor anything when we got back either.

Another Dutch organisation, the 'Pax Christi' Christian peace movement, began its association with Northern Ireland in the nineteen seventies when it too offered holidays in Holland to children from areas affected by the troubles. Pax Christi however soon felt that temporary respite would never provide a long-term solution and that work needed to be done in NI. They purchased a property in Killough Co Down, Kinderhouse, which is still used to accommodate youth groups – including visiting youth groups from Holland and elsewhere.

Local Holiday Projects

Children's Community Holidays

Children's Community Holidays (CCH) was formed in response to street violence involving children. In 1975 they began offering holidays to provide an inexpensive respite-break for children in the worst affected communities. Their model was based on the French Colony Holiday programme. Cohorts of young volunteer leaders (Monitors) were recruited from sixth forms and intensively trained (by previous volunteers) to deliver the holiday programmes. Many of the Monitors experienced their first meaningful cross-community encounter during the training.

I don't know that I'd properly met a Catholic before going on the CCH training in Glenmachan (Hampton House) – I went to a school that was 100% protestant, my dad was a policeman. I'd always been told to stay clear of Catholics and to tell nobody about what my father did. I fell in with a bunch from Rathmore (a Catholic School in South-West Belfast) – they were great craic. We sat up talking. I ended up going to the Rathmore Sixth Form formal and my partner at our school formal went to Rathmore. I went to mass for the first time and was exposed to traditional music. That was unheard of at the time.

The children's holidays took place mainly in the summer period using empty school buildings as residential centres. Participants slept on camp beds in the empty classrooms and each holiday included 60 or more young children. Each Monitor had responsibility for a group of 10 children that s/he would look after during a fortnight of self-programmed and communal activities. The children were all aged 8-15 and mixed in equal number from the two communities.

I took a group of lads fishing and overnight camping in Enniskillen during one CCH holiday – around 1980. During the daytime the lads were the roughest, toughest around. When the night came down they retreated into their tents and cowered in the corner. They knew how to live on the streets but the countryside was a whole different ball-game. They started opening-up and having conversations about the troubles – what struck us all were the similarities.

By 1992 over 11,000 children and 1,000 young volunteers had been involved in CCH but on-going financial problems in the late '90s culminated in a period of inactivity and eventually led to the organisation being officially wound up on 20th July 2001.

NI Children's Holiday Scheme

NI Children's Holiday Scheme (NICHS) began life in Liverpool in 1972 as an initiative to provide holidays disadvantaged Catholic and Protestant children and young people and moved its base to Northern Ireland the following year. NICHS endeavoured to improve 'tolerance and mutual understanding across the sectarian divide' through a shared residential experience. At one stage NICHS owned two residential centres, one in Belfast and another in Donegal, but, as peace became established and air travel more commonplace, international holidays became the norm in (even the most deprived communities). In 2009 NICHS determined that their services were no longer required and the organisation was dissolved.

NI Children's Enterprise⁶⁵

NI Children's Enterprise (NICE) grew out of the Irish Children's Summer Programme who offered the familiar pattern of a summer holiday in America away from the stresses and strains of living with rioting and bombings on a daily basis. The programme also aimed to try and bring young Catholics and Protestants together.

Having evaluated their programme in the early 1980's the organising committee began to consider the long term effects of the troubles on young people. They realised that on-going work would be required if lasting reconciliation was to be achieved between the young participants after they had returned from the US. In 1987 with philanthropic support from the US, NICE purchased a residential Centre in Ballycastle.

NICE's work is currently concentrated in Northern Ireland. Their youth programme delivers a range of training programmes to discover, build and create new relationships and understanding between the different cultures and communities than exist in Northern Ireland and beyond which it operates through a number of dynamic partnerships with Community Relations in Schools, the YMCA and others.

CR and Uniformed Youth Organisations

⁶⁵ <http://www.nichildrensenterprise.com/>

As has been illustrated, the traditional uniformed youth sector was not unaffected by the conflict and its aftermath.

Some scout troops viewed the outdoor adventure that they offered as a potential means of distracting boys and young men from the lure of the paramilitaries – others were even bolder. The 10th Belfast unit noted that at the outbreak of the troubles approximately one third of the troop were Roman Catholic⁶⁶ a tradition that they have maintained. They declare on their website that they are a “non-denominational Scout Group”. They are proud of their tradition of community relations and cross-border work and have maintained a number of sustained and close links with CBSI/CSI. The 10th have collaborated extensively with the 11th Belfast Scouting Ireland troop providing them with not only advice and support and but also leaders in the 1970s when the CBSI unit was attempting to re-establish themselves. Also of note has been the link developed between 29th Belfast Scouting Ireland and 37th Belfast Explorer scouts who have had many shared camps and co-operated on joint projects over many years.

Catholic Guides of Ireland engaged in the JEDI Initiative and briefly appointed a community relations officer. A number of guide companies (e.g. Spa and Drumaness in South Down) developed long term cross-community partnerships based on their shared ethos and repeatedly accessed YSCRSS and CRED Enhancement monies to support shared programmes.

The absence of any active Catholic BB or GB Units in Ireland means that those BB and GB units attached to Protestant congregations have had difficulties finding partner groups with a compatible ethos and method with which to develop cross-community contact programmes. Notwithstanding these difficulties a number of Brigades have forged links with youth clubs attached to Catholic parishes and CSI/CBSI/Scouting Ireland or CGI Units. The BB produced CR Guidelines for units and has developed a comprehensive set of resources on engaging with issues around disability and inclusion.

CR Youth Work and the Age of Social media

The interplay between the internet and social media has created a technological revolution with respect to the opportunities and challenges for engaging with community relations issues.

⁶⁶ “Straight & ready: a history of the 10th Belfast Scout Group 1908-1988” <http://tenth-scouts.co.uk/>

Whilst many organisations have resisted the lure of the web many have sought to embrace its possibilities.

Work in East Belfast at the end of the nineties drew the attention of youth workers to the potential offered by the emergence of social media to create a safe space for the discussion of controversial issues. During the recurrent Drumcree crises of the late '90s early forms of social media were used to maintain communication between groups of young people on either side of the peace line and web contact was demonstrated to provide a safe space where areas of dispute could be addressed and the trap of 'polite avoidance' eluded. It was also seen that social media could afford young people with a mechanism through which they could directly engage with public servants.⁶⁷

The Where is My Public Servant (WIMPS) project developed by Public Achievement took this concept further still. This youth led initiative began in 2004 with the specific intention of using social media to create a space for young people to discuss and debate issues and also as a tool to assist them to get organised, to campaign and to bring their views directly to politicians and others who have influence over the decisions that impact upon them. Public Achievement/WIMPS had many successes and gained global recognition – the organisation was unable to secure sustainable funding and was wound up at the start of 2016.

Youth Work, Formal Education and Community Relations

The statutory elements of formal and non-formal education had been united under the 1972 NI Education Order. The relevance of this was reiterated when responsibility for the administration of both the schools and youth service community relations programmes was handed from DENI to the Youth Sections of the ELBs in 1992. John Malone's 1970 "Schools Project in Community Relations" had illustrated the value that youth work techniques and approaches brought to CR work through formal education⁶⁸ – that approach was taken up by Youth For Peace and Spirit of Enniskillen. Yet, three decades later, the disciplines of teaching and statutory youth work seemed as divided as the communities that they were seeking to

⁶⁷ Milliken 1999 & 2001

⁶⁸ Gallagher 2014

reconcile (with the notable exception of the 1995-96 “Speak Your Piece” project). The Review of the Schools Community Relations Programme (O’Connor et al 2002) noted:

“The relationship between schools and the youth service merits greater development. It is recommended that greater cohesion be developed between schools and the youth service in the area of community relations, particularly to draw upon the skilled practice of youth workers.”

The potential for Youth Work to impact positively upon community relations work in schools was also highlighted in “The Nature of Youth Work in Northern Ireland”:

“A major challenge facing youth work and educationalists is the need for a new system or way of educating and learning that can tackle issues associated with growing up in a post conflict society. It is perhaps in this context that formal approaches to education such as schools could be combined more effectively with informal educational youth work approaches. Whilst there are apparent difficulties in regard to ethos, purpose and expected outcomes within schools and youth work, there is clear evidence in this research of the many benefits to young people that would accrue through combining formal education with youth work.”⁶⁹

The potential of a unified approach was recognised again by ETI during the 2009-10 DE Community Relations Policy review:

“There remains the need for more joined-up thinking and provision between those officers who provide support for schools and youth CR work”⁷⁰

At the same time in the forward to “Ensuring the Good Relations Work in Our Schools Counts” Sir George Bain stated:

“Many teachers are uncomfortable dealing with such controversial issues as racism and sectarianism. Their discomfort results partly from a lack of formal training, but also from a systemic reluctance to deal with difficult situations”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Harland et al 2005

⁷⁰ O’Connor et al 2002

⁷¹ CRC & Equality Commission April 2010

Traditionally youth work in schools had been seen as a mechanism to assist schools in dealing with the problem of disaffected pupils⁷² – the potential for co-working and skills-sharing between the two professional disciplines in order to make a contribution to the creation of a restorative society was not on the agenda. In 2007 the Community Relations Unit of the SEELB adapted an existing project which had been designed initially for a youth initiative and piloted it with Strangford Integrated College. Comments in conclusion of the report on this project noted:

“The programme was well received by the teachers and young people. The programme was recognised as having benefits for the School, young people, the wider community and the Youth Service. Positive relationships were developed among the teaching and youth work staff.”⁷³

The participants’ personal evaluations on this project also indicated a high degree of critical reflection; the pupils recognised their own learning. Comments included:

“I’ve learnt that through diversity there’s unity”

“I learnt more about political and religious situations in N.I. and how different colours and symbols represent a society”

“I learned how much I rely on routine, structure, family and the inner strength, which I never knew existed within me”

“I’ve learnt that many things are really insignificant; I’m confident in who I am”⁷⁴

Provisional discussions with teachers within secondary level schools engaged in the Schools Community Relations Programme indicated a great deal of enthusiasm for engaging in a more ‘cutting edge’ project with the support of skilled youth work staff. In 2010 SEELB obtained funding through the IFI Sharing in Education Programme to run the “Learning To Live Together” project. The project engaged seven pairs of post primary schools in a three year contact programme which was co-facilitated by teachers from the participating schools and youth workers from the communities in which the schools were located. Participants attained

⁷² Morgan et al 2008

⁷³ From my own recordings and unpublished project evaluation

⁷⁴ Ibid

accredited training awards and the programme was recognised as having fulfilled a number of strategic educational priorities.

At the end of the IFI funding period the initiative was awarded mainstreamed funds, revised and renamed “Learning Together” – albeit with community relations aspect removed and critical thinking components significantly reduced.

A similarly joined-up approach was adopted by the SELB Lurgan Town Project⁷⁵ which brought together stakeholders from political, civic, educational, business and social life alongside young people in order to allow for dialogue and contact within and between groups and to collaboratively address dialogue on the roots of sectarianism and the complexity of relationships. The project also sought to develop leadership capacity among the participating young people and to facilitate them to find a collective voice as co-creators in building a shared and better town.

At the launch of the report into the project in May 2013 Billy Gamble representing the principle funders (IFI) said:

The findings of this report demonstrate how the legacy of conflict continues to affect young lives in Lurgan. But there is also encouragement with the majority of respondents expressing a desire to see the area become a more shared environment. There is a readiness among young people to shape a better future and that must not be lost. It is vitally important that these views are heard and the next generation is given an active role in tackling the challenges they face in a meaningful and sustainable way.⁷⁶

Inclusive Youth Work

The dawn of the new millennium brought with it a conceptual sea-change – there was a shift of focus from *division* to *diversity*. New legislation required public bodies to take steps to ensure that they accommodated all potential users. The fair treatment of a broad range of communities of interest was enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998 and the equality clause of the 1998 NI Act – Section 75. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equality (Disability) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000 gave disabled people rights in the areas of the

⁷⁵ <http://lurgantownproject.com/>

⁷⁶ <http://lurgantownproject.com/community-dialogue-tool/>

provision of goods and services, education, sports, access to public facilities and accommodation and also in employment. The 2006 Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) made it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of good and services (including education and access to public facilities).

Youth work policy duly responded:

- Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice (2002) “Young people should... irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability be able to participate in the life of the unit on the basis of equity. In some instances additional support, encouragement and resources may be needed to facilitate participation on an equal basis.”
- The Community Relations Equality and Diversity Policy (2011) “children and young people need opportunities to learn about themselves and the culture, and about others and the similarities and differences in their culture. They need to build positive relationships with young people from different backgrounds (across the range of section 75 groups) and to dispel negative perceptions and images about those who are different from them; the self-confidence to have pride in their own tradition; and the resilience to deal with intolerance or prejudice.”

The CRED policy was heavily criticised for moving the attention too far away from addressing the paucity of quality in intercommunity relationships that had served to support and sustain so much bloodshed. There was little doubt however that a broader understanding of what was meant by community relations was required – this led some to speak instead of Good Relations to reflect the move away from a population divided along a single of religious ideology and political aspiration toward recognition of an ethnically, culturally and socially diverse population. The youth work sector adopted the word ‘Inclusion’ to cover work to raise the profile of and accommodate the needs of young people who identified themselves within one of the Section 75 ‘communities of interest’.

In 2003 Youthnet published the “ShOUT!” report into the need of young people who identify as being gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) in Northern Ireland.⁷⁷ The findings of the research encouraged Cara-friend and the Rainbow Project (LGBT support organisations)

⁷⁷<http://www.inclusiveyouthworkni.co.uk/Branches/YouthNet/YouthnetMicrosite/Files/Documents/Resources/pdf%20summary%20final%20shOut.pdf>

to support the establishment of a youth section – Gay Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland (GLYNI). GLYNI attained recognition from the statutory youth sector and has sought to expand the support that they offer throughout the six counties. They have also acted as mentor for the setting-up of new groups such as Prism in Armagh. It must be noted that many youth organisations still struggle with the idea of embracing diverse sexualities – most notably those with a dominant Christian ethos.

Previous community relations programmes were slow to react to the demographic changes described earlier. The initial influx of workers from the Philippines, India and Portugal joined a small established Chinese population and were subsequently to be enhanced with Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians and others with EU expansion in 2004. Whilst many of the first tranche of new arrivals were young, single men and women, after a while more established workers saw opportunities in NI and relocated with their partners and children. Research in the Lisburn area indicated that the increased ethnically diverse school population was not being reflected in the youth club population.⁷⁸ It was observed that the parents of young black and minority ethnic people had a number of concerns including:

1. They did not always understand the concept and principles of youth work as practiced in Northern Ireland.
2. They were wary of putting their children at risk from hostile locals.
3. They prioritised the maintenance of their children's connection 'home culture and language' over assimilation into the host community.
4. Time spent working (academic and for remuneration) was valued and prioritised over recreation which was, to some extent, considered to be time 'wasted'.
5. There was a risk of their children being affected by the 'loose morals' and lack of respect displayed by indigenous young people.

Thus a small number of specific civic education projects were developed for young people from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds using Peace III monies from YESIP in Lisburn, Dungannon and Craigavon. Many of these programmes were mainstreamed following the expiry of the funds from Europe.

Elsewhere a number of youth groups were set up to support young people to maintain the cultural and linguistic traditions from their homeland. The most enduring and prominent

⁷⁸ SEELB 2009

amongst these being GeNext who are affiliated to the Chinese Welfare Association⁷⁹ and Kameleon – a Polish youth group based in Belfast.

Whilst minor (and sometimes significant) changes to the structure and set up of buildings has in many instances allowed for the inclusion of young people with physical disabilities the participation of young people with learning difficulties in mainstream youth provision has proven to be more problematic. The care requirements and level of supervision required for young people with global developmental delay has led to many units resorting to specialised provision rather than fully including them into their generic day-to-day provision.

In response to these challenges Mencap (with the support of YCNI) created the Youth Inclusion Hub as a support, training and resource facility to assist individuals or youth groups to become better able to include young people with a disability.⁸⁰

The Future...

In spite of over 40 year of progress and refinement during an era characterised by often violent ethnocentric conflict there is currently a growing feeling of back-to-the-future for community relations youth work.

Whilst the successes of the peace process are of course to be welcomed it would appear that, in some quarters, action to address the enduring legacy of the conflict has slipped from the agenda. The polarisation that occurred in the 1970s has shown a dogged refusal to retreat. Young people growing up in Northern Ireland today are still faced with negotiating relationships in a deeply divided society. There is physical separation of the territories between the two dominant communities – most notably with regard to housing and schools – which has been shown to remain stubbornly resistant to change.⁸¹

Politicians from the two major parties appear reluctant to take a stance that might be unpopular with their core voters and appear intent on maintaining the division by pursuing party political policies that support a *one-for-your-side/one-for-mine* pattern of thinking rather than *two for us both when we share*.

⁷⁹ <http://cwa-ni.org/Youth.aspx>

⁸⁰ <https://www.mencap.org.uk/northern-ireland/what-we-do/projects/youth-inclusion-hub>

⁸¹ Nolan 2014

Public spending has come under intense pressure since the financial crash of 2008 and the election of successive Conservative-minded governments to Westminster. Statutory funding for youth provision has reflected this pressure. Having been moved to action in 1987 the statutory youth sector developed and delivered a variety of effective projects and models of innovative practice – this work was sustained and supported through ring-fenced funding. The withdrawal of DE core-funding to a number of voluntary reconciliation groups saw them go to the wall in 2010. In March 2015 the Minister removed the protective ring-fencing and the Education Authority responded by reassigning or releasing officers whose core responsibility had been to support the implementation of the CRED policy. There has as a consequence been a notable loss of expertise and a withdrawal from direct engagement with community relations issues. As had been the case in 1969, community relations youth work is once again reliant on philanthropic and charitable donations.

The guidelines for the most recent CR related youth work funding stream, T:BUC Summer Camp funding (2015), has allowed for the re-emergence of a number of questionable practice paradigms vis-à-vis short termism and the concept of “single identity”. Summer camps appeared to have run their course in the 1990s; their practices were revised in line with research evidence which showed the enhanced impact of enduring programmes with prolonged run-ins and sustained follow-up

It had been popular for some groups in some settings to engage in ‘Single Identity Work’ in order to build their confidence so that they would be better equipped to engage in CR projects at some future date (particularly in loyalist communities with regard to articulating their own cultural and political identity). Research pointed out that the value of such programmes could be questionable as they tended to maintain avoidance, reinforce existing prejudice and/or historical revisionism.⁸²

The term ‘Single Identity Work’ was expunged from all documents connected with the ELBs Community Relations funding schemes in 2005 and replaced by references to ‘Non-Contact Work’ or ‘Preparatory Work’ indicating that work with one of the two dominant communities should only be seen as pathway and precursor to Community Relations contact work with a group from ‘the other side’.

⁸² Smyth 2007

Indeed the very use of the term ‘Single Identity’ explicitly implies homogeneity within a given community. It emphasises internal solidarity and same-ness but does not recognise the complex assortment of factors that contribute to an individual’s sense of identity. As such the use of the term could be viewed as actively encouraging the construct of the other as *alien*. It serves to reinforce ethnocentric thinking and attitudes.

From a more positive perspective the Young Life and Time Survey has shown a steady improvement in community relations among young people. Sixteen year olds in NI have been shown to increasingly have contact across the religious and ethnic divides. However the ‘us and them’ mentality persists – 14% of young people *never socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community* and 24% say that they *have no friends at all from ‘the other side’*.⁸³

There remains much work to do.

This chapter has been written with the early pioneers of community relations work with young people at all times in the forefront of my mind. While some of these are still very much on the scene others paid heavily for their vision. They were prepared to take significant risks in order to build the better future that they had the courage to believe in.

*They stood up because they could do nothing else. Being human demanded nothing else... But not to have done so would also have been all-too human. And because they stood up, they affirmed a kind of humanity rooted in solidarity with those at the receiving end of threat, intimidation and oppression - without which we have no future.*⁸⁴

⁸³ Schubotz & Devine 2014

⁸⁴ Duncan Morrow writing in the Forward to “Up Standing” (2013)

Note

The use of language and in particular the nomenclature of contested spaces has been afforded great significance by the conflict. For many of those who support the reunification of Ireland the very concept of Britain retaining jurisdiction over the north-east corner of the island is an anathema; they avoid direct reference to Northern Ireland altogether speaking instead of ‘the north’, ‘the north of Ireland’ or even ‘the occupied six counties’. Similarly Unionists speak of ‘the province’, or ‘Ulster’ recalling the ancient kingdom whose boundaries reach beyond the current constitutional boundaries of Northern Ireland. In respect of the city that is predominantly referred to by unionists as Londonderry, Nationalists and Republicans elect to remove the imperialist epithet ‘London’ and call the city Derry. I have tried as far as possible to avoid the use of such disputed terms. Where this approach has proven stylistically clumsy or factually impractical I have endeavoured to balance the use of such politically-loaded terminology in roughly equal measure. My use of language should not be considered to be an indication of my preference for either of the two dominant political ideologies neither should my flexibility be assumed by the reader to be a reflection of neutrality. Such are the challenges of community relations work.

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Matt Milliken

Matt grew up as the son of a police officer at the height of the troubles. His earliest experiences of youth work were through scouting (1st Hillhall and 74th Belfast). Whilst still at school he began working in VSB summer schemes in the Village area of Belfast and trained as a Monitor with Children’s Community Holidays. Matt studied for a BA (Hons) in Youth and Community Work in Jordanstown 1981-85 before relocating to Berlin where he worked in social projects and undertook supplementary study to gain German state accreditation as a Sozialpaedagog (Social Educator). Following the fall of the Berlin wall Matt returned to Ireland to take up a youth work post with the SEELB. Over subsequent years he delivered community relations projects and training programmes in rural and urban areas, developed a Youth Strategy for the East Belfast Partnership and managed a string of international programmes. Matt completed an MSc in Education and Contemporary Society at the University of Ulster in 2000. His work has received a number of awards and has been profiled in the media and peer reviewed journals. Matt commenced a PhD research studentship with the UNESCO Centre in September 2015.

Matt is married to Moira and has three children (Oliver, Caitlín and Myles).

ⁱ Also the band of warrior-hunters led by Fionn Mac Cumhail in Irish legend.

ⁱⁱ A term coined in December 1971 by Reginald Maudling, the British Home Secretary at the time.

ⁱⁱⁱ CRYSSS would later be adopted for funding CR initiatives from HQ youth organisations. The ELB scheme shuffled the letters of the acronym and became YSCRSS.

^{iv} Equity: fairness

^v Diversity: an acknowledgement of our differences

^{vi} Interdependence: and a relational understanding of the ways in which we live and work together

^{vii} This course was accredited by Institute of Leadership and Management in 2006