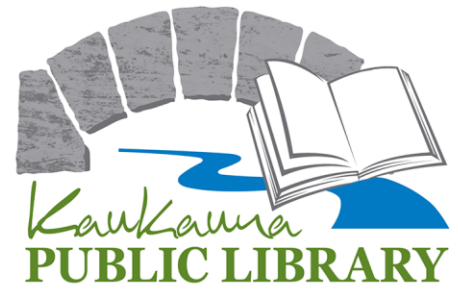


To: Kaukauna Public Library Board of Trustees
From: Library Director Ashley Thiem-Menning
Date: 5/16/23
Re: Conference & Workshop Notes



Here are some of my notes from the Toward One Conference I attended in April:

Keynotes:

It is a fact, not opinion that privilege exists. It is important for those in positions of privilege and power to use that influence to ensure that there is room at the table for all. Decisions that affect all should ensure that all had the opportunity to participate in making those decisions. It is important when we make decisions to look around and say, "Who is not here at the table with us? Why are they not here?" It is also critical to ensure that we use our privilege and power to invite those who should be at the table to the table. Ignorance is a reflection of privilege.

The keynotes talked a bit about tokenism too. They mentioned that they are tired of having to do all the EDI work. They often hear from people in power that they cannot find diverse people to help them make decisions or hire. Their response was "try harder." They are tired and it is up to us to do the work too.

Session One: It's Not the Destination, but the Journey: Intentionally Creating a Workplace Culture that Values Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

There was discussion about adding a J to EDI. The J stands for justice because marginalized people often fall prey to unfair laws and practices. There was also discussion about adding a B to EDI, for belonging. However, this presenter argued that there cannot be belonging without the work of equity, diversity and inclusivity, and that EDI work when put in place will cultivate a sense of belonging.

Implicit bias surveys exist and should be utilized to help people understand their bias. Culture climate surveys also exist to see if employee's feel that they can be their authentic selves in the workplace. They recommended not starting with an EDI audit, but starting more with a small group approach or survey work, to determine where/what your cultural climate is or what employees feel are issues related to EDI within the organization. Once you know what weak areas are, you can approach them first and after you can start audit work.

Language defines our reality and reflects our values. It is important to watch the language we use and to watch the language used on documents and policies to ensure it is not offensive or oppressive.

In the workplace, we need to watch for acts of exclusion. Acts of exclusion include gossiping, cliques, coddling, hateful speech, and othering. While gossip is very common in the workplace, when there is lots of gossip, or gossip is a major form of internal communication, it is typically a sign of a work environment that is excluding others. Cliques, or groups of people that commonly mingle together, are also an indicator of exclusion. While it makes sense for people in certain departments to mingle with one another at events because they may not know people from other departments, cliques that cross departments, are often also a sign of exclusion. When we coddle one employee because we “like” them, we are excluding others and setting unfair advantages. Hateful speech is another act of exclusion. While not all hateful speech is hate speech, which is not protected, we also want to watch for biased speech. Othering refers to individuals or groups being labeled as not fitting within the norms of a social group to the point where one may even believe that they pose a threat to their own group.

The point of inclusion is to ensure that everyone can be their authentic self at work and feel a sense of belonging for being who they are. Other ways that we exclude people includes whom we acknowledge (in images, during presentations, or even acknowledging that other cultures/people exist), displays and who/what are reflected in them, and even our decorations. The United States was founded on the premise of religious freedom; however, we often do not include other religions in our celebrations or décor beyond those that are Christian. A common example of this is a Christmas parade and only Christmas decorations being put out when there are people in all our communities that celebrate different winter holidays.

We cannot treat EDI work as separate; it truly needs to be a part of the organization as a whole. Privilege is a renewable resource.

Session Two: The Art of Connection: Community Building Skills Training

Change happens at the speed of trust. When it comes to building community, we may see four stages. A pseudo-community is when we say “we.” Chaos is when we focus on community as “you.” Emptying is when we refer to community as “I.” However, true community is when it is “us.”

We need to insure that when we are having discussions that we ask the opinion of the people not speaking as they may have the most to say. People long for peace and connection. People long to be seen and known. People are afraid to risk because of past rejections and bad experiences. There are ways to heal the past, restore hope, and build community. Building community increases outcomes and results. Community is an experience of authentic connection, unusual safety, and extraordinary respect.

Session Three: Wellbeing and Belonging: Inclusivity and Community Success Influenced by Data

Imagine Fox Cities has conducted two surveys since their founding; surveys were conducted in just our region with members of our communities. The first survey was to see where we are in terms of vital conditions and the second was regarding wellbeing specifically. There are seven vital conditions: 1. A thriving natural world. 2. Basic needs in terms of health and safety. 3. Humane housing. 4. Meaningful work and wealth. 5. Lifelong learning. 6. Reliable transportation. 7. Belonging and civic muscle.

The data from the survey indicated that since the pandemic many people have gone from thriving to struggling. It also showed that elderly, transgender, and people of color have the lowest wellbeing in our region. I have attended many events put on by Imagine Fox Cities, but this was specifically on what the analyzed data was telling us.

During this session, a few audience members spoke up about their experience as a person of color moving to our area. It sounds small, but one person said she was recruited here from Detroit only to find that there is no one to do her hair and she could not be driving four hours every two weeks to go to Milwaukee just to get her hair done. This is evidence of not belonging. If you cannot even get your hair done within your community, how are you supposed to feel welcome? Another individual spoke up and said when she moved here from California a decade ago, she would sometimes go months without seeing another black person in Appleton. She held up a sheet of paper and put a tiny dot on it with her pencil. She said, "This is what it feels like to be a black person in Northeast Wisconsin. A small black dot you probably can't even see in the back of the room in a sea of white."

Session Four: What Inclusive Leaders Do Different

Key qualities of inclusive leaders: self-aware, willing to learn, willing to share knowledge, and builders of community.

Belonging starts with a name. We need to learn how to say people's names correctly. We need to use their correct names and we need to give them the opportunity to tell us what their name is. They had us do an icebreaker in groups where we had to tell strangers the story of our name. It was actually interesting. The showed this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fN7cpMC1414>

Illinois Tool Works (ITW), of which Miller Electric is a part of, gave a presentation on their commitment to EDI. This is part of their responsibility to attract and retain the

best people possible. Their CEO started by taking the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion pledge. Then they had all of their top executives participate in EDI training, which consisted of learning about unconscious bias, actions they can take to minimize the effects of it, and how to lead in a way that reflects a culture where EDI is important. Then they expanded their training to all the managers. Then, they were tasked with inclusion through action, so ensuring EDI is a part of their recruitment process, gathering testimonials from employees, and looking for allies for projects.

In an effort to show allyship they had some of their businesses, like Hobart, take on projects. Hobart created a campaign called Hobart Against Racism in which they held conversations about racism and every employee could attend regardless of their role/job in the company and were paid to attend. From those conversations, they created a video about what they learned, which was shared with the other companies under ITW.

Then they started up Employee Resource Groups within ITW. They currently have the following ERG's, which are global with chapters in their companies all over the world. They are grassroots led DEI efforts led through networks including: Asian Professionals, Women's, African American, LatinX/Hispanic, Pride, Young Professionals and Veterans. Their ERG leaders are volunteers, have a budget set by ITW to use for their DEI work, create strategic plans, and connect with partners.

They talked about caring about your employee's well-being as a whole. They asked us to look at what we say we do and see if we are living what we claim. Are the metrics supporting our EDI claims? It is important to acknowledge what opportunities there are to share knowledge, whose perspective is missing from the organization, and who can be allies.

Session Five: Collaborative Approaches to Building Inclusive Workplaces and Communities

This session was about the Cassandra Voss Center for social justice, which is located on the St. Norbert's Campus in De Pere. They offer a six month intensive program for inclusive excellence. This is an opportunity for small groups to really dive into EDI work. This might be a good opportunity for our leaders to attend.

<https://www.snc.edu/cvc/InclusiveExcellence.html>

Here are some of my notes from the Leadercast event, which I attended in May:

Andy Stanley was the first speaker and he talked about intuition in leadership. His background is as a faith leader. He noted that leader intuition often does not allow for team member intuition. His rules of intuition were as follows: Make it actionable-

Is there an issue that deserves my attention? When you catch yourself selling yourself on an idea, hit pause. You rarely have to sell yourself on a good idea. Do not confuse ambition with intuition- Ambition is “I want” whereas intuition is “we should.” Discover who on your team has intuition for what and include them strategically. Make your meetings “first impression” matter zones with, “What is your gut instinct to this idea?” opportunities for the team.

The second speaker was Dr. Radika Dirks, who spoke about artificial intelligence. This was a scary presentation because we are not ready for AI yet. She gave an overview of how AI is generated using information found on the internet, which is often not correct and very negative. She warned of the dangers of AI, including a suicide in Belgium over a mental health AI bot. However, she also indicated that when used properly AI can help us predict important things, solve issues, and help make our daily lives more efficient. We are really going to have to think about AI here and its influence on public libraries. There will likely be an AI policy coming in the near future.

The third speaker was the CEO of Leadercast, Joe Boyd. He indicated that good leaders are always ahead of the curve while always being able to look back. His questions for us included “What is one thing your replacement would stop doing immediately?” “What would your replacement start doing immediately?” “What would they continue to do?”

Eddie Ndopu, author of *Sipping Dom Perignon Through a Straw*, was the next speaker and he spoke about accessibility beyond basic access. He mentioned that most organizations will follow ADA to be in compliance, but that people with disabilities are more than basic compliance and they deserve to show up as their full authentic selves, which they cannot do when they are excluded and marginalized. We need to go beyond, where activism is the world of imagination. To be an activist or advocate, we must use imagination and reconfigure connections. Representation alters perception.

The next speaker was Stephanie Chung, the first black, female, CEO of a private jet company in the US. She talked about what it was like to run a company in an industry that was grounded during the pandemic and then face one of the hardest job markets of all time. She stated that in 2020 we had a population reporting a major burnout. A 2021 Gallup poll indicated that only 34% of people felt engaged at work. In 2022, 4 million people quit their jobs each month. In 2023, reports indicate that 61% of people have thought about quitting their job.

People want to be their authentic selves at work. However, we often rely on instinctive stereotypes. She showed us images of three different people. We had to guess their age and their profession based on what they looked like. Many people were saying things like, teacher, nurse, IT, retired, and veteran. The next slide showed all of their mug shots; all three were on the FBI's most wanted list. She indicated that this is why we need to see people for who they are, not how we have been programmed to see them.

The next speaker was Jeremie Kubicek, who is the author of *Peace Index*. He talked a lot about the five P's- purpose, place, provision, personal health, and people as the things that bring us peace. He noted that a record amount of people are on prescription drugs, which there is nothing wrong with, however he noted that if we as leaders can work through the five P's, we can assist in bringing greater peace to our staff. Purpose: How good do you feel about what you are doing? People: How at peace are you with the top ten closest people to you? Personal Health: How are you feeling physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually? Provision: Do you have the things you need (not want) to survive? Place: Do you have a space in which you can recharge? He had us rate these each between 0-100, add up our five scores and then divide by five to find our peace scale. Other notes from his presentation included that our hope often determines our level of peace. To also not to let someone else's lack of peace effect our level of peace. The peace index was created to help manage your emotions so others do not have to manage your emotions for you. He recommended journaling the following to keep the peace: What was good today? Where was I not at peace today? Why? Am I prepared for tomorrow?

The next speaker was Erica Keswin, author of *Bring Your Human to Work* and *Ritual Roadmap*. Her talk was mostly on the importance of rituals in our daily lives and how that translates to work as a leader. She mentioned that psychological safety and purpose equals performance. Productivity increases when people feel like they belong. People are more engaged with their work when they have a purpose and people are more productive when they trust the organization they work for. To connect we have to take time for empathy. She mentioned at one of her positions they had an event called DEAL, drop everything and learn, where everyone learned about a topic for one hour together regularly.

The last speaker was psychologist and author Henry Cloud. His topic was on trust in leadership. The five essentials of trust were understanding, motive/intent, ability, character and track record. Through all our interactions, people are building maps of us and their experience with us.

I would also like to thank Cindy Fallona for sponsoring me to attend Board Engagement & Fundraising Through a DEIAB Lens through the Nonprofit Leadership Initiative in May. Here are a few notes and Cindy will speak about this at the meeting briefly as well:

This was an excellent presentation by Christal M. Cherry, CEO of The Board Pro. She was very candid in that we need to articulate the impact of gifts and how we present that impact is vital; purpose rather than mission. She questioned whether there were BIPOC people on our teams, do we know the community we serve, do we have fundraisers of color, do we have board members of color? We learned that BIPOC individuals donate more than white individuals even with major disparities in median wealth demographically.

She also spoke about changing the culture on how we validate gifts and that we cannot raise money from those we do not see. It was also interesting to see the statistics on giving. In our industry, we are often focused on individuals and grants, yet we rely heavily on grants and spend the most time on them, yet they pay out the least statistically.

Lastly, she spent some time talking about boards in general. She mentioned that leaders need to spend more time checking in with boards to make sure they are feeling supported, but that boards should also take time to self-reflect and evaluate. She has had board members self-evaluate their role on the board individually and some boards even evaluate themselves together to look for ways in which to improve.

