

Scottish Rural Equality Network Seminars on Rural Identity

Role of Inspirational Speakers

Introduction

In a bid to develop the face-to-face aspect of the SREN (Scottish Rural Equality Network) and build the capacity of local equality forums, HIEF aims to deliver a series of local seminars across rural Scotland on the theme of rural identity.

The aim of these seminars is to encourage Equality & Diversity stakeholders to critically view the processes of building diverse and inclusive rural identities, and through this be better able to address any negative reactions of mainstream society to 'differing' identities so that we can encourage communities to communicate effectively and engage with a wide diversity of individuals and groups.

Delegates will explore the concept of identity; its complexity and subjectivity and will hopefully discover new, *positive* ideas that will help develop improved social inclusion in local communities.

Our inspirational speakers can contribute to our 'journey' of discovery by providing narratives of actual experiences in local settings. Apart from the initial introductions, 'summings up' etc, there are no other keynote speakers at these events so we would expect that these personal testimonies will linger powerfully in the memory of each day.

The Story we would like from our speakers is

- one that is truthful and personal; that illustrates that issues of equality & human rights are about people more than they are about legislation
- one that helps us appreciate the multi-dimensional character of how we view ourselves in relation to others in society

You might tell us about tensions or conflicts between different aspects of personal identity. For example:

- you might view yourself as a 'general' member of the workforce whilst others might view you as being 'different' in some way and so give you an identity that you are not comfortable with; possibly one that surprises you as you don't identify with it yourself
- you may be 'labelled' by some people (or yourself?) as belonging to more than one of the 'equality strands' of gender & gender identity (including transgender), disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and age – and find that people identify (or even stereotype) you in different ways. Perhaps you are thought of as someone who is BME/gay or gay/BME or just BME or gay? This may be because of how other people identify with you eg other gay people might identify with your sexual orientation before they identify with your race etc

We want to hear how you use identity as a positive factor in your daily life

Experiencing different views of ourselves can sometimes be harmless, entertaining and amusing, but sometimes they can have a negative impact on our lives – perhaps some people are unable to view us as anything other than a two dimensional stereotype and treat us in unfavourable or inappropriate ways.

What would help us in our seminar discussions would be to hear how you have created a positive experience out of any identity tensions. For example

- Have you changed your own view of yourself or perhaps gained confidence through self-reflection on your identity?
- Do you identify differently according to which group of people you are with/ situation you are in?
- What are the positive aspects of multilayered identities and what gems of wisdom can you share with our delegates?

Technical Details

The seminars are fairly informal so it is up to you if you want to use any technical support such as PowerPoint presentations, flipcharts, flash cards etc but narratives are also effective when delivered as just one person speaking to a group of friends.

We have allocated a maximum of 20 minutes at the opening of the seminar for your presentation and this could include time for people to ask questions – if this is something you are comfortable with. Do not feel that you have to speak for a long time; sometimes short stories say it all.

You are of course, welcome to join us for the rest of the session, in which case, please let us know so that we can count you in for lunch. It would be helpful if you can complete a registration form – or at least make us aware of any special requirements you may have to ensure this is an accessible and inclusive event.

Expenses

Although we do not offer a speaker's fee, we are happy to reimburse any personal expenses. Please retain all receipts.

You can read more about the Scottish Rural Equality Network and about the Rural Identity Seminars by visiting www.hief.org.uk or don't hesitate to contact us at HIEF

I hope you will enjoy participating in this important piece of work. Thank you

Best wishes,

Matt Tyrer

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