

Community Meeting 1, Philadelphia 4th June 2010.

Members of the board introduced themselves to those present.

Dan read a communication to the meeting written by Anne Maclean, from New Zealand, that she had requested be read to the membership in her absence. The membership expressed their appreciation to Anne for making contact with us this way.

Charlie clarified that AAGT members don't automatically get signed onto the members email list. He invited anyone interested in being signed on, to approach him at the conference.

Jack acknowledged the recent deaths in the community and named those who had passed on.

Nancy clarified the objectives of the community meetings for the newer members of AAGT.

Laurie, a first time attendee, wondered about having translators available for workshops in light of AAGT's desire to be more inclusive.

Toni spoke to potential of the community meeting to build community. Toni wanted to mark Seán Gaffney who is absent from the conference due to a community process that resulted in him deciding to leave AAGT. Toni requested that we address this in some way, although didn't necessarily feel this needed to be in the community meeting.

David, a process group leader, expanded upon the purpose of process groups in AAGT. Some groups had only a small attendance and he wanted to raise their profile and their importance in the life of the community.

Judy asked for further clarity on what happened in the issue raised by Toni about Seán's leaving. Dan asked if there was a way we could go into the facts without entering a "he said, she said" with regard to people who weren't in the room. He spoke to the broader issue of what we do when there is hurt in our community - how do we address it both during and after the hurt?

Lynne appreciated Dan's tact in this and felt it to be very important that the details of this issue were not shared in the meeting. Peter asked the question of how we can be with each other when there's the potential for something hurtful.

Carl spoke of the situation as a systems issue, and one not just to do with Seán. He alluded to other occasions when people have been hurt/damaged/bruised by communication within the community when it takes place via email. He felt this

had happened often enough to merit the creation of a taskforce to look at this, if there were interest.

Anne said she had always liked the Irish Interest Group. She said she would write to Seán to let him know that she missed his input in this contribution to the community.

Michael disagreed with someone raising an issue, such as the situation with Sean, and then someone saying it was inappropriate to give further information. He felt this created an in-group and an out-group and one that affected the community. Michael spoke to the process in the room at this juncture. He felt a fuller response was required - not the details of the issue - but of creating a fuller ground before closing down discussion. He invited us to cultivate the field to allow more processing at this point.

Charlie shared his process in view of Seán's and Brian O'Neil's absence. He moved on to make a wider, and more general, point about how we can create the ground for someone to stay here when they feel they no longer can, such as when hurt.

Anna shared an occasion in AAGT when she has been really hurt via email discussions. She wanted to speak to this in the meeting, and she also shared her sadness at Seán's absence. Anna shared some of the details of her experience of being hurt over email in AAGT. This was particularly difficult for her due to her living in Australia and the challenge of staying connected to the community when so physically distant.

Jack said he had had a lot of contact with Sean in the last few months. Jack wanted to talk about the general themes - and he said he had seen this kind of hurt happen over and over again in AAGT. He put that "cannibals at least have the decency to only eat their enemies alive". He spoke to the way communications happen over the internet and how this contributes to the hurt that arises. He said we need to be more sensitive to how we respond to people in general in AAGT - over email, in the community and in training centres.

Victor seconded Jack in relation to the history of email communication in AAGT. He referred to personal attacks having happened in the past. Victor spoke to the process whereby many members will be non-judgmental with their clients, yet personally attacking with fellow AAGT members.

Nancy spoke to these difficulties being present in email communication in general and not something particular to AAGT. She described it as a disease of the medium.

Phil spoke to his substantial experience of email communication. He spelled out the options in terms of how discussion lists are moderated or not moderated:

ground-rules, self-regulation etc, and also his different experiences of each of these.

Joe spoke to how many people had dropped out of the community in the past, many of whom have come back - some of whom are sitting in the room right now. Given this he asked, when so many good things were happening, why do we always have to go with what's painful.

Claire spoke about the members' discussion list and its purpose. She wondered why we cannot speak relationally on our email list. She noticed that all the lists turn into the same few people communicating between themselves.

Lee spoke to the many times she's been hurt in organisations. She also spoke to our knowing that emails can be a hurtful medium and so we should proceed with caution when engaging this way. She requested we dialogue about this and was grateful to those present for doing so at the moment

David shared his discomfort with the current process when specifics of particular incidents had been mentioned.

Bud shared how he was touched in the discussion. He shared his fondness for absent members. He also shared his past experiences of conflict in the organisation when he was president, and he shared the history of the covenant of community. He supported the idea of a task-force to explore the ways in which we communicate.

Charlie spoke of how pleased he was that Liv had returned to the community and shared this with her directly.

John spoke to everyone being together and asked us to consider this in terms of the current community.

Adam made clear that Jenny O'Neil was also not at the conference and he wanted to mention her as well. He shared his own hurt over email, in response to what Phil had said.

Ann mentioned Tine who is also absent from the conference. Ann spoke to what Tine had taught her in terms of organising when working on the conference. Ann spoke to the inspiring way in which Tine has stayed with the struggle of what has been difficult.

Kate spoke of her embarrassment that, as a community, we are not treating each other better. She echoed Victor's point about how we do this as professionals, but less in community.

Michael spoke to the current process whereby new voices were coming forward in the room to speak, instead of the same old voices that speak in email discussions.

Urtzi spoke to bringing the focus more to what's happening in the room. He brought in his own personal process during the recent discussion. He asked that we look more at what is happening in the room as the discussion continued.

Kailash spoke to AAGT's talk of becoming more international. He spoke of his pleasure at the breadth of membership present from different countries.

Dan shared agenda items for the AGM, so that the community would be informed about these in advance of the meeting.

Dan was applauded for his holding of the organisation during his term of office.

Dan thanked the board for the support they offered him.

Dan handed on the gavel to Cathy to symbolise her officially coming into office.

Cathy accepted the gavel, the sacred Maori cloth, the Russian-Doll-Chicken-Egg and became President of AAGT.

Cathy presented Dan with a gift on behalf of AAGT to honour the work he has done. (A watercolour of Independence Hall by an artist local to Philadelphia.) She read a piece of writing about all the achievements Dan would be remembered for during his presidency.

Cathy invited the past presidents of AAGT to join her at the front of the hall, standing. Those present applauded them and expressed their appreciation for their contributions to AAGT.

Sarah Fallon
AAGT Secretary