

ABRUPT INCLUSION: PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES IN TRANSITIONS, CRISES
AND CHANGE

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STRATEGIC MOMENTS

- Strategic moments exist when we can do more to promote transformative inclusion than at other times.
- Yet these moments have two faces --- the possibilities of transformative inclusion, as well as of marginalization, exclusion and oppression.
- Neutrality is not possible

FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

- Life transitions – to childcare, from childcare to school, from school to work, from work to retirement
- Moments of innovation and pioneering inclusion
- Often clear focus of where we want to be included and how

TRANSITIONS AFTER CONFLICT OR CRISES

- Times of transition and change following conflicts and natural or environmental disasters offer unusual opportunities to look for and claim transformative inclusion
- Vulnerability is experienced by communities, societies, but inclusion is not always evident
- We must rebuild after these events, but we have an opportunity to build back better and more inclusively.

WHAT ARE CRISES?

- A moment in time when what is understood or practiced as the status quo is threatened and at risk of destruction
- In times of crisis, difficult choices must be made and changes implemented to mitigate the perceived risks or prevent destruction of key institutions or practices.
- Global crises are also created and sustained within and by communities

CRISES IN COMMUNITIES – COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

- Crisis may indicate an imbalance between a threatening situation and resources to cope with that situation
- Crisis in communities: precipitating event(s) requiring an emergency response eg wildfires, flooding
- Communities in crisis: crises may be chronic and cumulative and a crisis situation may become a “normal” way of life

KEY QUESTIONS

- Who is included in communities during times of crisis?
- Who is invisible or ignored during times of crisis and how is their invisibility maintained?
- What resources ensure inclusion or facilitate exclusion?
- How are relationships of caring addressed in crisis?
- What ideas, discourses, mechanisms or structures are used to maintain these unequal relationships?

LABRADOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES



- Three Indigenous nations and settler
- Research team: Deborah Stienstra, Gail Baikie, Susan Manning
- FemNorthNet: Relationship research 2010 -2016

CRISIS: MUSKRAT FALLS HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

- Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project 2011 – now
- 2011: Submission by women to EA process
- 2012-13 Claiming our Place
- 2014 Building Links Knowledge Sharing Tour
- Women with disabilities 2015-16



EXPERIENCES OF INCLUSION

- While Northern communities were small and often closely knit, some women with disabilities experienced greater visibility, inclusion and support, although that inclusion was often context-specific:
- In school and through education -- “prom queen”
- In the spaces that made the women feel included, including the Women’s Centre or the Friendship Centre
- Through relationships with friends and families, or their church community
- Through sports activities, including Special Olympics:

THINGS CHANGED WITH MUSKRAT FALLS....

- Accelerated growth and urbanization had unequal consequences for these women:
- inadequate health and transportation infrastructure
 - “They’re low on staff. And it takes forever to get one [taxi], and sometimes you can’t get one at all “
- increased costs of food and housing
 - “The regular person around here can’t afford to pay rent”
- increased concerns about safety
 - “We don’t feel that same level of safety anymore “

BEING PUSHED FURTHER TO THE EDGES OF OUR COMMUNITIES

- Few prospects for jobs from the new work site
 - “They're bringing in people from outside Labrador to do jobs like janitorial, shoveling snow, things like that. That should not be happening”
- Little comprehension of how to include people with disabilities – primarily through medicalized model
- Increase in street solicitation
 - “It puts women’s safety at a risk, particularly women with mental health issues and who are experiencing homelessness issues... it certainly multiplies it [sex work] when you have a lot of influx of men into a community like this that aren’t from the area...they don't know these women. They don't mean anything to them. Their families don’t mean anything to them. you know

TENSION – INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING AND DISABILITY

- “My granddaughter doesn’t know she has disabilities and we are not going to tell her”
- living with the tension presents both an opportunity and a risk at the community level
- Possibilities of using Indigenous principles of inclusion in agreements
- Without the naming and explicit identification of persons with disabilities, they will be forgotten

STORY IS ONGOING...

- Women have stronger presence than before FemNorthNet
- More Indigenous women working together
- Working on participatory community indicators of well-being
- Resistance to Muskrat Falls, with leadership from Land Protectors, is continuing

THANK YOU!

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