CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT AT UBC

A First Gathering and Working Session
July 27th, 2017

WHAT IS CONFLICT?

• Difference that matters
• Difference that mobilizes our emotional resources
• Becomes a dividing line between “us” and “them”, or between competing claims over fairness, law or morality
• Strong sense of right and wrong

• Natural, normal, unavoidable
  • Academic DNA, Diversity, Societal background
  • Destructive AND transformative
  • Individual AND collective

CONFLICT ESCALATES

1. We are different. We believe differently.
2. We are right.
3. We are right and you are wrong.
4. You are a less adequate version of what we are.
5. You are not what you say you are.
6. We are in fact what you say you are.
7. What you are doing is evil.
8. You are so wrong that you forfeit ordinary rights.
9. You are less than human.
10. You are evil.
11. You are demonic.

Dialogue and debate
Barbed jokes
“Microaggressions”
Sarcasm
Making excuses
Ignoring emails
Resorting to email

Psychological violence
Physical violence
Resignation

Barbed jokes
Passive-aggressive behaviour
Gossip
“Microaggressions”
Sarcasm
Making excuses
Not showing up to meetings

Legal battles
Harassment
Filing complaints
Going on strike

Psychological violence
Physical violence
Resignation

Communication breakdown
Creating bottlenecks
Excluding
Discriminating

Going to the Dean/Head
"Wars"
Legal battles
Resignation

Communication breakdown
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"Wars"
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Conflict escalates

CONFLICT ESCALATES
RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

- We “resist” when
  - Resisting
  - Engaging doesn’t work
  - We are not heard or feel we are not heard
  - We are not willing to say what needs to be said
  - We feel powerless and are looking to build power
- Can be an intelligent, important strategy, particularly in pursuit of justice
- Indication of information/wisdom that can’t find a ‘legitimate’ voice
- AND, inefficient, costly, hurtful etc.

WAYS TO ENGAGE DIFFERENCES

- “Violation of Code”
- “Embodied”
- “Dialogic”
- “Social Justice”

CONFLICT IS NOT ABUSE

Difference Conflict Abuse
WHAT DO WE WANT FROM CONFLICT ENGAGEMENT?

• End Abuse, Get better at Conflict.
• Use conflict as fuel for learning, personal growth, institutional transformation.

Presentation by:

Aftab Erfan
Director of Dialogue and Conflict Engagement
Equity and Inclusion Office
2306E Brock Hall | 604.822.9095 | Aftab.erfan@ubc.ca