Creating Equitable Boards
with People with Lived Experience

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Andy Silver, Chief Executive Officer, Vancouver Housing Authority

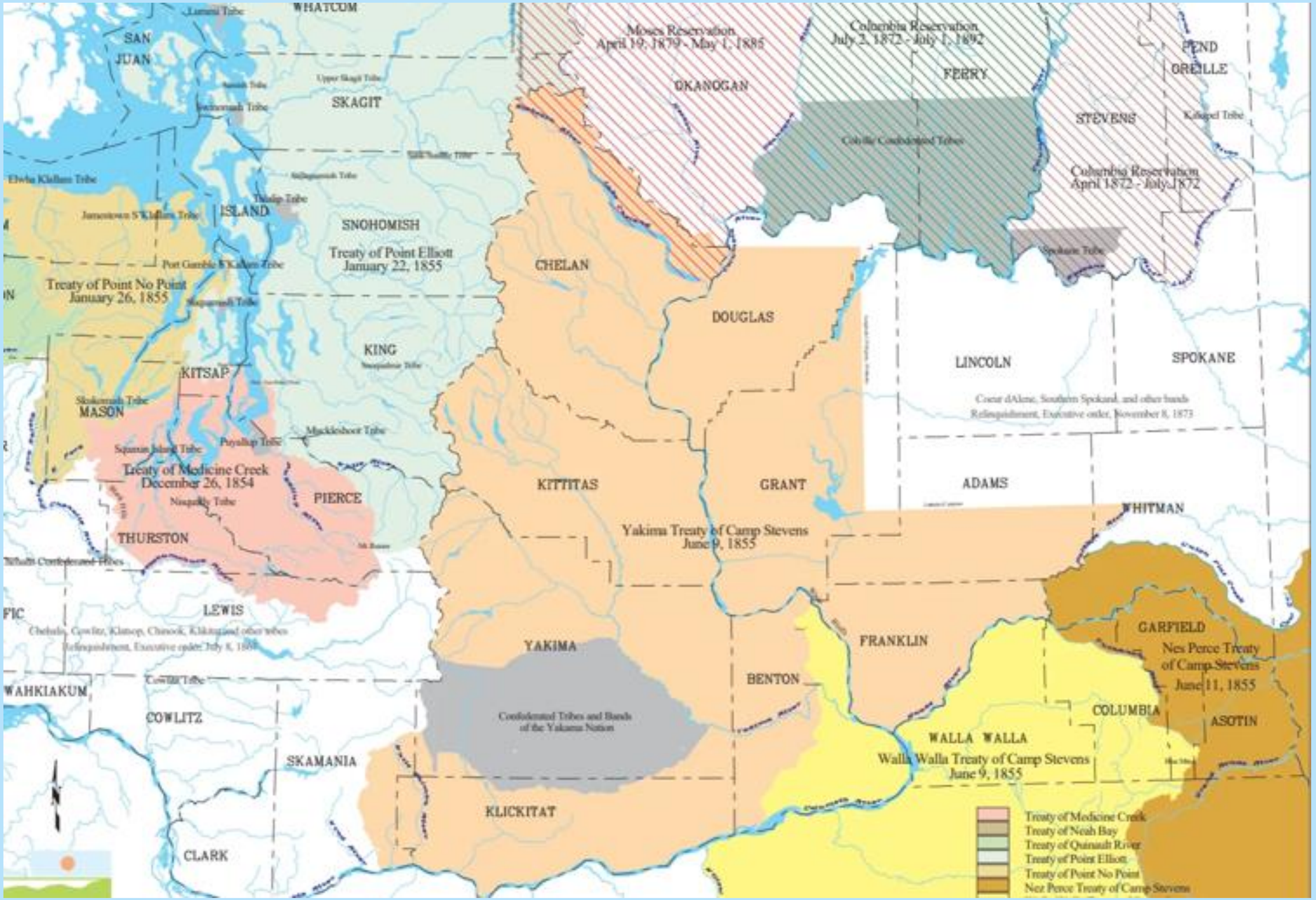


Land & People Acknowledgements

We honor the Spokane Tribe of Indians, whose ancestral homelands we occupy today. The Spokane people have always been part of a larger network of tribal nations across Northeastern Washington, trading and traveling with the Coeur d'Alene, Kalispel, Colville, and Kootenai peoples along shared river systems, gathering grounds, and cultural pathways.

We acknowledge the histories of displacement and broken treaties that affected these nations, and we recognize their ongoing leadership, cultural strength, and sovereignty.

We offer our respect and gratitude to the Spokane Tribe and all Indigenous peoples who continue to shape this beautiful region.


WHATCOM
SAN JUAN
SKAGIT
Moses Reservation
April 19, 1879 - May 1, 1885
Columbia Reservation
July 2, 1872 - July 1, 1892
OKANOGAN
FERRY
STEVENS
POND OREILLE
Columbia Reservation
April 1872 - July 1872
ISLAND
SNOHOMISH
Treaty of Point Elliott
January 22, 1855
Treaty of Point No Point
January 26, 1855
CHELAN
DOUGLAS
KING
KITSAP
MASON
LINCOLN
SPOKANE
Coeur d'Alene, Southern Spokane, and other bands
Relinquishment, Executive order, November 8, 1873
Treaty of Medicine Creek
December 26, 1854
PIERCE
THURSTON
KITTITAS
GRANT
ADAMS
WHITMAN
Yakima Treaty of Camp Stevens
June 9, 1855
LEWIS
YAKIMA
FRANKLIN
GARFIELD
Nez Perce Treaty
of Camp Stevens
June 11, 1855
BENTON
WAHKIAKUM
COWLITZ
Confederated Tribes and Bands
of the Yakama Nation
COLUMBIA
ASOTIN
WALLA WALLA
Walla Walla Treaty of Camp Stevens
June 9, 1855
SKAMANIA
KLICKITAT
CLARK
Treaty of Medicine Creek
Treaty of Neah Bay
Treaty of Quinault River
Treaty of Point Elliott
Treaty of Point No Point
Nez Perce Treaty of Camp Stevens

Community Agreements

- Be mindful: the impact of your words may differ from your intent.
- Be open to feedback: receive it with a willingness to learn when someone names harm.
- Challenge ideas rather than people, and listen to understand differing perspectives.
- Practice creating space/accepting space: speak less if you often speak easily, speak more if you often hold back.
- Uphold confidentiality: what’s said here stays here; what’s learned here is shared.
- Take care of your needs: sit, stand, stretch, snack, step away, and fidget as needed.
- Acknowledge that content about history, policy, and harm can be retraumatizing for you or others, and that discomfort can be part of growth.

Today's Speakers:



Andy Silver



Duana Ricks-Johnson



Ma.Caroline Lopez

Definitions



- Equity
- Accessibility
- Lived experience
- Tokenism
- Communication Styles and Jargon
- Resource Imbalance
- Perception of Expertise





Definitions

- Board of Directors/Commissioners
- Advisory Board



Who's in the room?



Why is it important to have people with lived experience/expertise on your board?



"Those with lived experiences of homelessness typically have the best understanding of the reality of our work to prevent and end homelessness – both in terms of the problems that exist and the knowledge of the services and interventions that are the most effective solutions. This is why it is so important to meaningfully and intentionally integrate them into the decision-making structure of our work at the system and program level."

from the HUD Exchange on "Centering Lived Experience"

webpage link



Foundations of Genuine Partnership

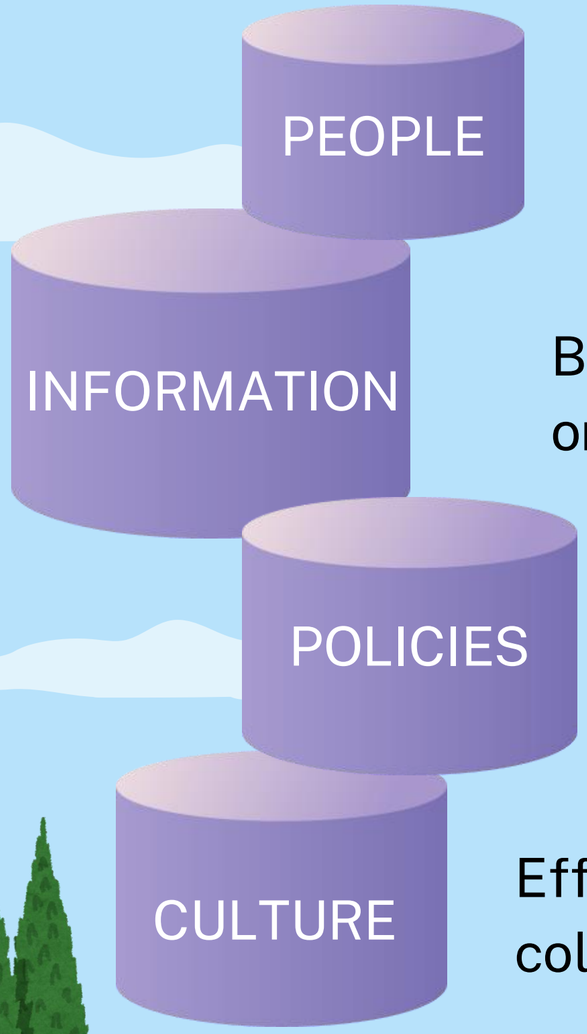


“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But, if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

~ Dr. Lilla Watson, Murri (Indigenous Australian) artist, activist and academic working in the field of Women's issues and Aboriginal epistemology



Four Pillars of an Effective Board



Effective boards have directors who represent different ages, ethnicities and demographics and bring a variety of skills and experiences to the boardroom.

Boards are more successful with real-time insights about their organization and business landscape. Diversity brings information.

Directors (as a team) must set and follow clear governance mode (policies) to ensure their actions are ethical, compliant and aligned with the organization’s direction.

Effective board management cultivates a CULTURE of openness, collaboration and safety to challenge the status quo.

article link

"If you find yourself on a committee discussing the needs of a particular group of people, but you look around the room and don't see anyone from that group ... you should be HIGHLY skeptical of any 'conclusions' reached."

-author unknown



Tips for effective board management

“Lived Experience Voice is needed to achieve the best outcome when utilized as a part of the whole board making process.”

~ Duana Ricks-Johnson

- Take board composition seriously
- Engage diverse perspectives
- Create a collaborative culture
- Inspire continuous learning

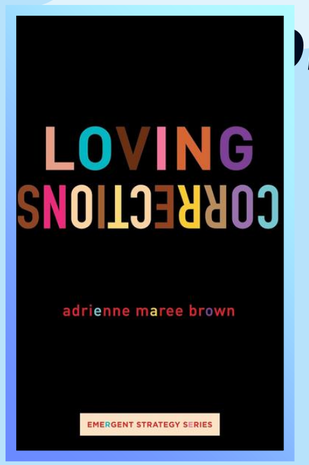


Addressing Power Dynamics



“Racialized capitalism, in particular, trains us to expect that some people fall through the cracks into unjust suffering; our cultural individualism tells us that this is accepable, as long as we aren’t the ones at the bottom.”

~ adrienne maree brown,
author, activist, facilitator, singer





How do power dynamics show up on boards and advisory groups?

- Decision-Making Authority
- Tokenism and Exploitation
- Communication Styles and Jargon
- Resource Imbalance
- Perception of Expertise



What sharing power looks like...

- Acknowledge Existing Power Structures
- Share Decision-Making Power
- Create Rotating Leadership Roles
- Encourage Open Dialogue
- Ensure Equal Access to Resources



Equity & Inclusion

"Inclusion isn't just inviting someone to sit at your table. It's believing they belong there."

-Mia Carella, writer



Equity & Inclusion



Tangible elements toward equitable and inclusive board participation:

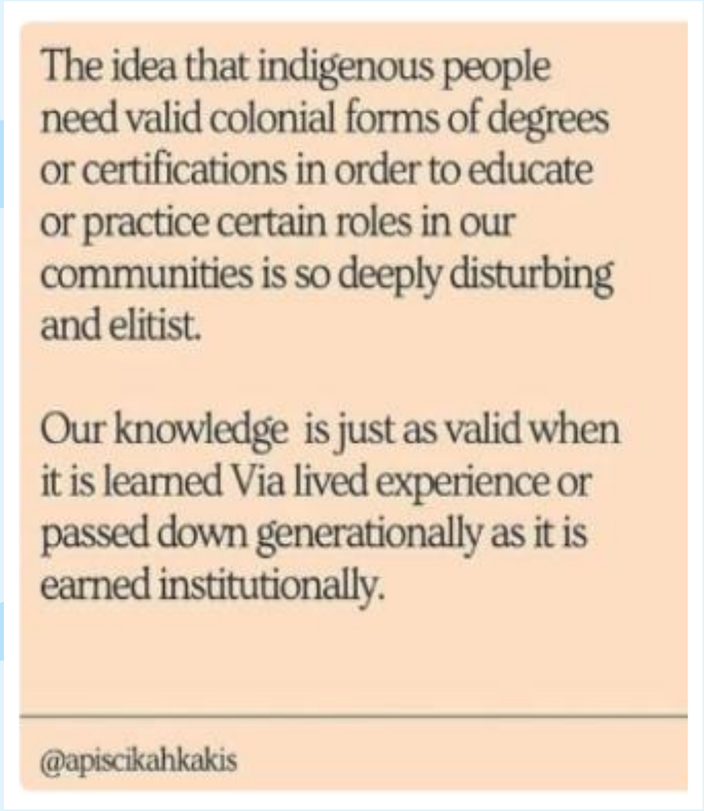
- Time & day of week
- Location
- Childcare
- Technology (ex. computer and app/program access, internet, etc.)
- Compensation...

Equitable Compensation & Time Consideration





Emotional & Knowledge Labor



Emotional labor refers to the effort required to manage and regulate one's emotions in order to fulfill the emotional expectations of a role, especially in professional or social settings.

Knowledge labor refers to the work of sharing expertise, lived experiences, or intellectual contributions, often without formal recognition or compensation.
Both forms of labor are often overlooked but are critical in inclusive spaces like boards and advisory teams.

Practical Implementation

- What are your top takeaways?
- Action: *What's one thing you can do tomorrow?*

Resource Handout:
Creating Equitable Boards Checklist



Conclusion / Call to Action

- **Take Immediate Steps:** Identify one or two areas where your board can immediately implement the practices we've discussed today — whether it's equitable compensation, ensuring diverse voices are heard, or addressing power dynamics.
- **Build Relationships:** Reach out to members with lived experience. Ask for their insights, not just on the challenges they face but on the solutions they envision. Authentic partnerships start with listening and valuing every voice at the table.
- **Commit to Ongoing Learning:** Continue educating yourself and your board on the importance of equity, inclusion, and trauma-informed practices. Consider hosting regular training sessions or workshops to keep these principles at the forefront.
- **Follow Through:** Don't let today's discussion end here. Create a plan with tangible steps, assign responsibilities, and hold each other accountable. Remember, progress is made through consistent, collective effort.

“What we must do is commit ourselves to some future that can include each other and to work toward that future with the particular strengths of our individual identities. And in order to do this, we must allow each other our differences at the same time as we recognize our sameness.”



~ Audre Lorde, writer, professor, philosopher, civil rights activist, self-described “Black, lesbian, feminist, socialist, mother, warrior, poet”

Thank You!

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