



International Coalition of  
**SITES of CONSCIENCE**

# DIVERSITY CHALLENGES AND THE STORYTELLING PROJECT

Northern Ireland



International Coalition of  
**SITES of CONSCIENCE**

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The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) is a global network of museums, historic sites and grassroots initiatives dedicated to building a more just and peaceful future through engaging communities in remembering struggles for human rights and addressing their modern repercussions. Founded in 1999, the ICSC now includes more than 275 Sites of Conscience members in 65 countries. The ICSC supports these members through seven regional networks that encourage collaboration and international exchange of knowledge and best practices.

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Cover photo: Wreath Laying at RUC GC Memorial

# PREFACE

This toolkit shares lessons learned from the peace-building organization, Diversity Challenges, in developing a storytelling project about the recent conflict in and around Northern Ireland with former police officers. Moving from conflict to peace presents challenges for societies who have experienced high levels of violence and unrest. One such challenge is addressing the past.

This toolkit presents a way of addressing conflict through storytelling. It recognizes that people's experiences are important and that they have a right to be heard. It is based on the work carried out by Diversity Challenges in its storytelling projects "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line" and "Voices from the Vault." Law enforcement officials and others who had a police background or who policed the conflict participated. The 2016-2017 project, "Voices from the Vault," was supported by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience Project Support Fund. Green and Blue was funded by the EU Peace Program.

*Voices from the Vault* expanded on *The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line* project and provides a further opportunity for those who served in the former RUC, police in Republic of Ireland, or the Garda and their families, who were affected by the conflict in and around Northern Ireland, to tell their story and have that story told to others through exhibitions, photography, text, drama, DVD or through the website: <http://www.green-and-blue.org/>

The initial storytelling projects later developed into a play, entitled "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line" that explored the realities faced by the individuals who patrolled the border during the height of The Conflict. The multi-media production that grew from participants' stories and the drama represented different experiences of two individuals on either side of a man-made line on the ground.

In all conflicts there are competing voices and accounts surrounding the causes of the conflict and the actions of those involved or what happened to them; therefore it is imperative that many views are heard to provide the fullest possible understanding of the past. If we are to learn from the past to build a future on a firm foundation, society needs a clear understanding of historic events and the views from many differing voices. This toolkit does not set out to give a right or wrong way to proceed with story collection, telling, and gathering; but, instead, covers the issues faced in this work working with former police officers and the lessons learned in this program. Development and learning is still taking place and Diversity Challenges would welcome feedback and comments from others so that the process can be developed further.



Andy Galloway project worker talks to story-teller.

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Interface Peace Wall Belfast

# INTRODUCTION TO DIVERSITY CHALLENGES<sup>2</sup> AND THE STORYTELLING PROJECT

Diversity Challenges is a peace-building charity in Northern Ireland that was established in 2001.

## VISION

A society in which people understand, and take responsibility for, the shared and distinctive traditions of all communities.

## MISSION

To assist culturally-specific groups in integrating community relations principles and considerations within all aspects of their work.

The organization has worked in a number of ways, including:

- Targeting key culturally-specific groups within Ireland, with greatest impact on community life;
- Identifying influential individuals, within the organization, who are driving change (or wish to drive change) towards a fuller and more constructive role in a diverse society;
- Supporting these individuals through coaching, training, networking and practical assistance in order to develop and implement change strategies within their organizations;
- Providing training on areas such as community development, good relations, essential skills, drama, storytelling, and musical skills;
- Using the experience gained to develop, publish, and promote good practice models for international circulation; and,
- Providing consultancy and training support on the use of best practice models to agencies in other countries that are facing similar challenges.

As part of any continued development toward a peaceful society emerging from conflict, there is an essential need to address the past. This requires a range of responses. Diversity Challenges has recognized, through its work, that storytelling is an important part of peace-building in ensuring that there is a diversity of voices are heard as well as a diversity of stories being told.

## 1.1. Background on the recent Northern Ireland Conflict (The Conflict) and the resulting peace process:

It is generally accepted that The Conflict began in 1969. The Conflict is generally seen in four key, overlapping stages as follows:

### **Pre-1969**

Discontent leading to demands for rights; a history of division and repeated violence

### **1969-1990s**

Widespread violence

### **1990-2001**

Dialogue leading to ceasefires and the start of an open peace process; peace-making, Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and political accommodation

### **2001-Present (2019)**

Peacebuilding work at community levels to develop relationships and learn how we can deal with our troubled past. This work has been supported by the EU Peace Programmes I, II, & III.

The Conflict resulted in 3,720 fatalities. The highest levels of casualties were in the 1970s with 496 in 1972. While the overall figures are smaller than in other world-wide conflicts, remember that these fatalities are within the context of Northern Ireland having a population of 1.5 million people.

### **Of those fatalities:**

- 2,087 were civilians;
- 1,012 were members of the police/army;
- 395 were Republican Paramilitaries (IRA, INLA and others);
- 167 were Loyalist Paramilitaries (UDA UVF and others); and,
- 59 others included public representatives, public servants, and targeted businesspeople.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, 47,000 people sustained physical injuries that often resulted in life-changing circumstances. While statistics are not readily available, it is generally recognized by health and social care professionals that The Conflict resulted in very high levels of mental health problems among the general population - across all age ranges. Approximately 19,600 people were imprisoned during The Conflict and conflict-related imprisonment continues to be part of life in Northern Ireland.

### **The violence included:**

- 16,200 bombings;
- 37,000 shooting incidents;
- 22,500-armed robberies; and,
- 2,200 arson attacks.<sup>4</sup>



The main physical impact of The Conflict was mostly in Northern Ireland. The Conflict also directly affected the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain; and, there were a number of violent incidents across Europe. Within Northern Ireland, The Conflict was not evenly spread; Belfast, Derry, and rural South Armagh saw the highest levels of violence. Over a third of those who died lived in just five postal districts in North and West Belfast.<sup>5</sup>

While some areas have seen a transformation and have benefited from the peace, others continue to struggle. In many communities there continues to be social and economic division. This division is further exemplified by recent political debate on questions of if and how the United Kingdom will leave the European Union. Research by the University of Ulster, published August 2014 on the 20th anniversary of the IRA and Loyalist ceasefires of 1994, has shown that people living in areas where Republican and Loyalist violence was at its most intense in Northern Ireland are the socio-economic losers of the peace process.<sup>6</sup> The University of Ulster survey of those districts at revealed that they failed to enjoy any major “peace dividend” in terms of rising incomes, better jobs, or general life prospects once the IRA and Loyalist ceasefires were declared. For many, life prospects have worsened.

Many of these communities are still divided by physical “peace walls.” A significant number of these walls have lasted longer than the Berlin Wall. The continued need for these physical barriers is reflected in continued sectarian violence at these interfaces. In the twenty years since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in 1998, the number of “peace walls” has actually increased in Northern Ireland.

### Addressing the Past Through this Project

While the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement set up systems for government, reflecting the divided nature of Northern Irish society, there has been no consensus between the political parties as to how to deal with the contentious past. The Power Sharing Executive has increasingly been beset with internal differences, resulting in a failure to make decisions on a range of topics.

In December 2014, there was an agreement on ways to deal with the past and the outstanding issues of flags, parades, protests and paramilitaries - The Stormont House Agreement.<sup>7</sup> This agreement, however, was not implemented and has been superseded by the Fresh Start Agreement in November 2015.<sup>8</sup> Various action plans and updates have occurred since 2015. This lack of political response has meant that progress on addressing the past has largely been led by various community organizations and initiatives such as Diversity Challenges.

The aim of this project was to ensure that the experiences of those affected by The Conflict were identified, collected, and amplified and to contribute to the civil society initiatives of addressing the past. This project aimed to collect the stories and interactions of former police officers.

The project specifically focused on former members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and former members of An Garda Síochána along the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the two separate Police Forces and their interactions over the past years from 1921 to 2001. The stories were told by both former officers who policed that border and their family members.



Training Session

# STORYTELLING METHODOLOGY

Storytelling is a powerful medium that is present throughout many societies and cultures. In Ireland, it has a long history and is captured through oral and written traditions. Storytelling is important for both the storyteller and the listener/reader.

Storytelling can encourage reconciliation or more division depending on how the process is utilized. In a safe environment, and with an ethical approach, storytelling can be an important part of positive inter-community and cross-cultural dialogue. Conversely, storytelling can just as easily be a process that increases biases and resentment - reminding the storyteller and the audience of the wrongs that have been inflicted upon them and their community without offering space for positive actions. Storytelling can be and has been used as fuel to maintain the conflict.

It is necessary when considering how storytelling and dialogue can aid reconciliation to understand the degree of division that exists, and has existed, and how trust and understanding can be developed. If the process is forced, and there is no sense of safety, then it can reinforce old prejudices and hurts and can set back any chance of reconciliation.

For example, it is important to examine terminology early on in the process. Even though everyone speaks the same language in Ireland, we often do not have agreed terms to describe the place, the participants, or the duration of The Conflict, let alone an agreed narrative as to what happened or who is to be considered a victim or a perpetrator. It is important to recognize these differences when considering the stages that should be activated in order to engage in positive dialogue.



Former Garda and former RUC members who participated in Green and Blue discuss their experiences.

### WHY WORK WITH FORMER POLICE OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES?

The overall goal was to develop an ethical storytelling process in order to obtain personal stories on the nature of policing and The Conflict in and around Northern Ireland. These stories provide insight that is not available elsewhere and make a valuable contribution to the historical archive of The Conflict. These accounts can then be accessible to the public and analyzed by people from all backgrounds thus increasing understanding of the complexity of The Conflict. Furthermore, Diversity Challenges believes that this project has contributed to healing and reconciliation.

“The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line” is a unique cross-border project. It is the first example of co-operation of former police officers and their families to tell their stories of policing during a conflict. It presents a unique contribution to gathering oral testimonials of a conflict. Several oral history collections from non-state actors and former paramilitaries are currently archived. However, if we are to achieve a fuller understanding of The Conflict, it is critical that absent voices are also captured.

For the most part, it is unusual for state agents in any conflict to talk about their experiences. The reticence of state agents can be attributed to a number of reasons. In Ireland, these reasons include issues of trust and access, the “loudness” of critical voices some of whom have “studied from afar;”<sup>9</sup> and, that there are investigations that seek to attribute blame, find fault or seek support for certain preconceived critical positions.<sup>10</sup> In particular, there is a firmly held belief amongst police officers that:

- They will not be afforded a fair hearing;
- Their comments will be taken out of context and misrepresented; and,
- Their actions will be viewed through the lens of hindsight and modern standards.



Storytelling workshop

There is also the additional barrier that there is a culture of silence in policing, meaning that an individual is expected to only talk to other police officers or former police officers, not share stories with those outside of law enforcement, not even to their families. For personal security during The Conflict, police officers and their families did not reveal their jobs; and, instead, would say (for example) that they were civil servants. One police officer told his daughter that he was a "bin man" and that he cleared the streets of rubbish. He told her that he had to work at night because many items of rubbish were left on the streets at night. This is now a joke in the family.

Children were taught not to say "what Daddy did" when asked. For these reasons, it was a massive culture change to agree to tell stories and to promote the project to colleagues. In order for this culture change to take place, trust had to be developed between participants. The project also had to overcome the impact of tribunals and continuing investigations into unsolved crimes where former officers were being questioned.

This is the first time that these stories have been collected. In order to successfully complete the project, it was critical that a good working relationship was developed as a partnership among Diversity Challenges, The RUC George Cross Foundation representing former RUC and The International Police Association (Ireland) representing former Garda was established. Without this working partnership the project simply would not have taken place. This meant that considerable time and energy had to be committed to promoting and explaining the project to the client group. There were numerous meetings with former police officers promoting "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line" as well as articles in police journals and magazines. This created a range of inquiries that had to be responded with a consistent, clear message. Examples of questions included: what was involved, who would be telling their story, and if there was insurance to protect against libel.

Together, these issues made officers and their families distrustful. Some were hesitant to speak due to the fact that they did not want to risk operational methodologies and investigations for current and future intelligence-led policing. Ultimately, there was a crisis of confidence which "silenced" the voices of police officers. This crisis of confidence was addressed by following an ethical methodology that included using researchers they knew, building trust that their accounts would be provided within the context of The Conflict.

## STORY COLLECTION, FACILITATION AND TRAINING

To ensure that participants would be comfortable and to respect the developing trust, the following ground rules for the project were established by organizers, with input from facilitators and participants.

Every stage of the process is voluntary. Participants should be told and consistently reminded that it is OK to speak and that it is OK to remain silent at any time. It is OK to stay and it is OK to leave. Participants can withdraw at any stage of the process with no need to explain or justify their decision unless they wish to do so. The participant has the final say on what, if anything, is put into the public domain.

Participants are entitled to privacy. It is they who determine what to reveal and what not to reveal as part of their story. The story can be attributed or anonymous. The story can be public or it can stay private, and audio files or written transcriptions can be deleted if requested by the participant. There will be no attempt to coerce participants to agree to their stories being shared. The process should foster a relationship built on trust between the facilitator and the participants.

It is unacceptable for the material to then be used for the benefit of the facilitator for research, leaving the participants feeling abused/let down by the process. It is, therefore, important to develop trust and reduce any perception of a power differential.

## Considerations for Storytelling in Groups and Individually

The environment is seen as safe for a person if they feel comfortable there, free from pressure or any form of threat. The degree of safety can change and is affected by a number of factors including:

### THE FACILITATOR

The facilitator is essential to helping storytelling participants engage with the topic and each other in the most productive way possible. Facilitators must facilitate dialogue without imposing their own beliefs or perspectives, promote an environment that discourages domination and judgment, ask probing questions to encourage deeper exploration, and effectively synthesize the main ideas that emerge.

### THE VENUE

The venue's location, history, the participants' familiarity with venue, and the presence or absence of certain symbols (which might be reassuring or off-putting) are all important factors to consider.

### THE PARTICIPANTS

The organizers should consider who is participating. Considerations include if the participants are familiar with each other already, who the participants represent or may be perceived to represent, and what perceptions participants may have about others' backgrounds.

### THE SUBJECT MATTER

It is important to consider the specific subject that will be discussed by the participants and if that subject is known to be triggering, contentious or if it has the possibility of becoming contentious. For example, organizers must think about what the general political climate is at the time that might affect high or low tension within a group or for a specific participant. For example if there has been an incident then the political tension may be high and then we would amend the proposed encounter.

## Story-Gathering Facilitation Training

A key decision in the planning of the project was to train former police officers in facilitation and as the story-collectors themselves. It was recognized that the cohort of participants was more likely to tell their stories to a former colleague than to a researcher. It meant that the story-gatherer facilitators would understand any jargon and could then explain the terminology in a way that could be understood by the general public.

The one-day training was offered multiple times. It was led by Diversity Challenges who are a recognized training center with Open College Network (OCNNI). It offered an OCNNI accreditation in storytelling. Training included developing an understanding of different ways of dealing with the past (including forgetting) and exploring the risks and benefits of these various ways. It further developed: the risks and benefits associated with storytelling, ethical principles of storytelling, and the methodology of ethical storytelling. The participants completed learning journals for each topic and were involved in class discussions. The journals and the class discussions were assessed. The assessment of the class discussions meant that those with reading and writing issues could still receive accreditation.

Diversity Challenges obtained the funding to train facilitators as story-gathers as well as to provide travel expenses and refreshments. The participants completed learning journals on each of the topics in the table below. This record and the class discussion were used in the assessment. The participants would complete the journals in their own time, after the training,

## Using Storytelling to Deal With The Past

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Understand the risks and benefits of dealing with the past	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and analyze different ways of dealing with the past and associated risks and benefits.</li> </ul>
2. Understand the risks and benefits associated with storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and explain potential risks and benefits in the storytelling process.</li> <li>Explain ways to mitigate risks.</li> <li>Explain the limitations of participants.</li> </ul>
3. Understand ethical principles of storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize the ethical issues associated with storytelling.</li> <li>Analyze the principles as defined by Pollit and Beck 2004.</li> <li>Explain and demonstrate the principles of ethical storytelling.</li> <li>Explain and demonstrate informed consent and disclosure.</li> </ul>
4. Understand the methodology of ethical storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain and demonstrate the preparation for storytelling.</li> <li>Use a range of story collection techniques.</li> <li>Explain and demonstrate editing and its linkage to informed consent and disclosure.</li> <li>Analyze and demonstrate and the forms of publication and distribution.</li> </ul>

and could contact the tutor for advice and support. The journals were marked by the tutor and verified by a recognized internal verifier as part of OCNNI standard procedures. The details of the training can be found on the website [www.green-and-blue.org](http://www.green-and-blue.org).

The training explored the benefits and risks of storytelling, the importance of an ethical process, and how those from a state force background (including police) would often be the most reluctant to tell their stories. The training examined different ways of dealing with the past and approached that include: commemoration, storytelling, acknowledgment, living memorial museum, day of reflection, and truth recovery, from the work of the [Healing Through Remembering Conversation Guide](#).<sup>11</sup>

The training also included that the project's story-gathering was not meant to cover an unsolved crime, mention the name of someone or an event that was not already in the public domain or who was not part of the project and had not signed a consent form, and not meant to be probing by the story-gatherer.

**Examples of appropriate questions included:**

- Why did you join the police?
- When did you join?
- Where did you serve?
- When did you meet or have contact with the RUC or Garda?

These questions were meant to stimulate the discussion. The advice in the training was that if the story veered into unsolved crimes then the recorder was to be switched off and the process halted and brought back to safer territory. Additionally, the advice was that if something was told then it could not be untold and the story-gatherer had a responsibility to inform the authorities. As there is no amnesty for The Conflict in and around Northern Ireland; and, as there are active inquiries into unsolved crimes, the process and participants had to be kept safe.



Participants receiving training certificate from Will Glendinning, Coordinator at Diversity Challenges.



### 1.2.1.

#### Physical, Social and Psychological Wellbeing of Participants

Potential participants received a copy of the project briefing, the consent form, a document about ethics, and information about psychological services, all of which are available in the Appendix. This gave the potential participants time to consider whether to go ahead or not with participation.

A secondary meeting would then be set up, at an agreed upon location, where the storyteller felt at ease. At this second meeting, any further questions could be answered and the consent forms would be signed. Participants and the facilitator agreed to "informed consent" for this process. Consent is given from an informed basis and not as a result of any coercion or pressure or reward, participants had the option to withdraw at any stage. A copy of the form would be retained for the project and another copy would be given to the participant to keep before proceeding with story-collection.

Confidentiality is a key component of this storytelling initiative. It is important to discuss and agree the degree of confidentiality depended on each session, if there was more than one participant sharing a story in a group setting. The Chatham House Rule is a good starting point; the Chatham House Rule states that, "Participants are free to use the information received in the discussion, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."

Confidentiality agreements cannot cover any disclosure of an incident where details or threat of a potential crime/abuse are given. In these circumstances, the facilitator is duty-bound to inform the appropriate authorities. Consequently, this project will not collect stories on events where there is an unsolved crime.

It is important when designing, and then implementing, the story-collecting process that any legal consequences are considered. Diversity Challenges had access to professional advice through the advisory group; as a result, they were able to get legal advice at minimal cost from a lawyer with expertise in oral history work, in the design of the process and the consent form.

As there is no amnesty, stories about The Conflict in and around Northern Ireland are of interest to the authorities, especially if they potentially give information about an unsolved crime. This has already happened with the Boston Tapes project;<sup>12</sup> the police went through the courts to get access to tapes of interviews even though the interviewee was told that what they were saying was confidential. Therefore, the Diversity Challenges project required that the story-gatherers walk a very fine line to ensure that stories were told, but were told in a way that did not bring the project or the storyteller into conflict with the law through libel or criminal investigation. The knowledge of the Boston Tapes controversy was another reason why those who had a potential story to share might be reluctant to participate. Hence the legal advice and the checks in the design of the project were important in obtaining and maintaining the trust of Diversity Challenges' client group.

#### PSYCHO-SOCIAL COUNSELING SERVICES

As part of the process, there should be psycho-social support resources available to anyone who may have suffered trauma or for whom recalling past events creates trauma. For this project, there was a qualified counselor with experience in trauma available to all storyteller participants and facilitators.

### 1.3.1. Story Collection

The stories were recorded on a digital recorder, as agreed to by the storyteller. The recorder was placed on a soft surface so as to reduce echo. The format of the questions and stories to be collected would be discussed before the recording started. The need to avoid any instances where there was an unsolved crime was agreed to; and, the storyteller was asked not to use the names of any people who were still alive who were not participating in the project

After recording the digital file containing the story, it was emailed to the coordinator and then sent to a transcriber. The transcribed files were returned to Diversity Challenges and sent back to the story-gatherer facilitator. Diversity Challenges acknowledged receipt of the transcription and then the transcriber deleted all copies. The story-gatherer would then meet with the storyteller participant and they reviewed the transcript, editing it as needed. Only when the storyteller participant was completely satisfied was the story transcript finalized; then, it was published according to the storyteller's stipulations. The audio file was edited where possible to fit with the written script by deleting sections that had been removed. The only audio copy that was kept was the agreed upon edited, final version.

**The editing process also removed any reference to a named person who fitted into any of the categories below:**

- Had not signed a consent form (i.e.. was not part of the of the project);
- Whose names was not already in the public domain
- Connected to an unsolved crime.

If the person was deceased then their name could be included. Following this process, an audio recording was given to the storyteller. And, finally, if publication was agreed to then the files were placed on "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line" webpage.

### GROUP DYNAMICS

In a group, the power dynamic will change. This can occur, for example if a participant is voluble and domineering or if a participant is very quiet. For this reason, it is important to implement ground rules in order to safeguard the story-collecting and sharing process for all participants. A hierarchy of stories can also develop, because of group dynamics, where one person tells a particularly impactful story and others either feel that they need to match it or feel that their story is of less importance and not relevant. This can result in self-censorship among participants.

### POTENTIAL ISSUES/ RESPONSES

Often, potential participants initially said they had no story to tell. Then, after listening for ten or fifteen minutes to various conversations, the facilitator/story-gatherer was always able to say, "What you have just told me is a story." Another issue that became apparent was that rank still mattered to participants even after retirement. If "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line" was to succeed, it was critical that some former high-ranking officers needed to provide a story. One of the first stories collected was from Peter Sheridan, formerly an Assistant Chief Constable in the PSNI and now the Director of Cooperation Ireland (a reconciliation charity). Obtaining his story and having it for public view on the webpage was important. Following that contribution, members of the project management group also gave their stories, which were then put on the webpage. Once Diversity Challenges could point to stories that were made public, other stories followed.

## RECORDING PROCESS AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO STORIES

Different types of story-gathering were explored, including: note-taking; audio recording; and, video recording. The benefits and risks of each were examined. The audio recording was viewed as the best method for this project as it gave an accurate account and was not as obtrusive as video. It also allowed for anonymity if that was the desire of the storyteller. The options for differing types of disclosure were also examined, including: the audio file to be available on the webpage with the name along with a written transcript; the audio file to be available on the webpage along with written transcript, but no name attached; only a written file available; or, the story only retained for the use of the storyteller. These options were available on the consent form.

A dedicated webpage was created for the project: <http://www.green-and-blue.org/>

This not only became the public profile for the stories, it also provided background information on the policies, procedures, forms, and training. All of the forms could be downloaded by the story-gatherer facilitators; and, storytellers were referred to the webpage for further information and investigation before they participated in the project. Once the story had been agreed upon for publication, a pdf of a story was uploaded as was the agreed upon audio file. This gave anyone access to the public stories.

Further developments of the webpage are being explored, including a private forum page for participants and invited guests so that there can be discussion of issues raised. This will need to be clearly monitored. The development of a search process so that researchers can explore the stories for various themes is also being explored. An archivist will be used for this component.

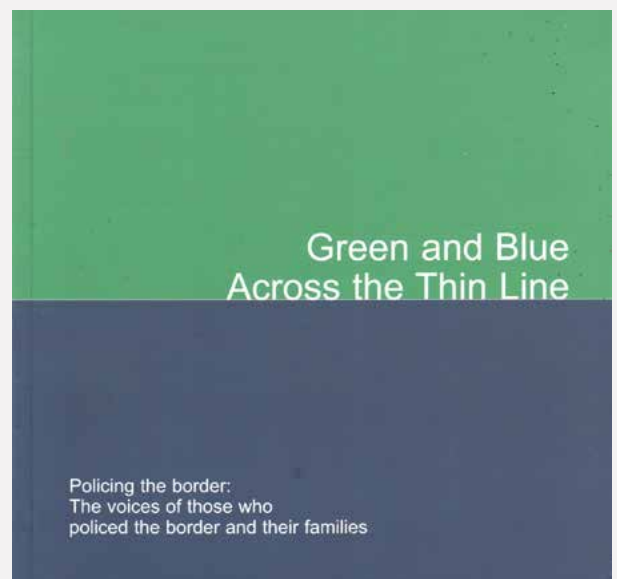
## PUBLICATION

The stories were published on the website and a number of stories were selected for publication in a book. Photographs from the participants were used to illustrate the selected stories; each participant received a copy of the book and there were additional copies available, free of charge, to others interested in this work.

## VISIT

In the last year of "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line," a visit, from the Republic of Ireland to Belfast, was arranged for the participants and their families. For a number of the Garda this was the first time that they had been to Belfast. They were hosted by Diversity Challenges' partners, the George Cross Foundation, at the Memorial Garden to the RUC. This provided the opportunity for a wreath laying - memorialization ceremony to take place.

The visit also included a tour of the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont and a presentation on another of Diversity Challenges' storytelling projects "AFTERMATH," with a facilitated discussion following the presentation. The panel consisted of Will Glendinning (coordinator of "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line"), Roger McCallum (RUC GC), Tim Mairs (Police Service Northern Ireland),





Wreath Laying at RUC GC Memorial

Laurence Mckeown (coordinator of "AFTERMATH").<sup>13</sup> This gathering was diverse, including a former RUC officer, a serving PSNI Officer, a former member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and a former Republican Hunger Striker, who all worked together.

For a number of the participants, this was the first time that they had seen those from such differing backgrounds working together. The fact that they knew Will Glendinning and Roger McCallum, through the project, meant that they trusted them and saw that this type of dialogue and working together was acceptable and feasible. A number of the participants reflected on this in the discussion and afterwards saying that seeing the diverse platform showed them that it was okay to engage in dialogue with those from differing backgrounds, including those from the IRA who had been considered the enemy during The Conflict. Others thought that it was not right to enter into such dialogue and that it was disrespectful to the victims of IRA violence as there had still been no apology or repentance. This remains a difficult issue. It is a personal decision whether to engage in such dialogue. It is similar to deciding whether or not to tell your story. It is a matter of free choice and, whatever the decision, the person's choice needs to be respected.

### 6.1.1.

#### Further Exploration and Continuation of the Project

Diversity Challenges wanted to explore how the stories could be transformed and used in other formats to catalyze dialogue about the conflict. Theater is an empowering tool that can challenge preconceived opinions. To this end, Diversity Challenges commissioned a feasibility study and explored how a theater commission might be developed as the next phase of "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line" project.

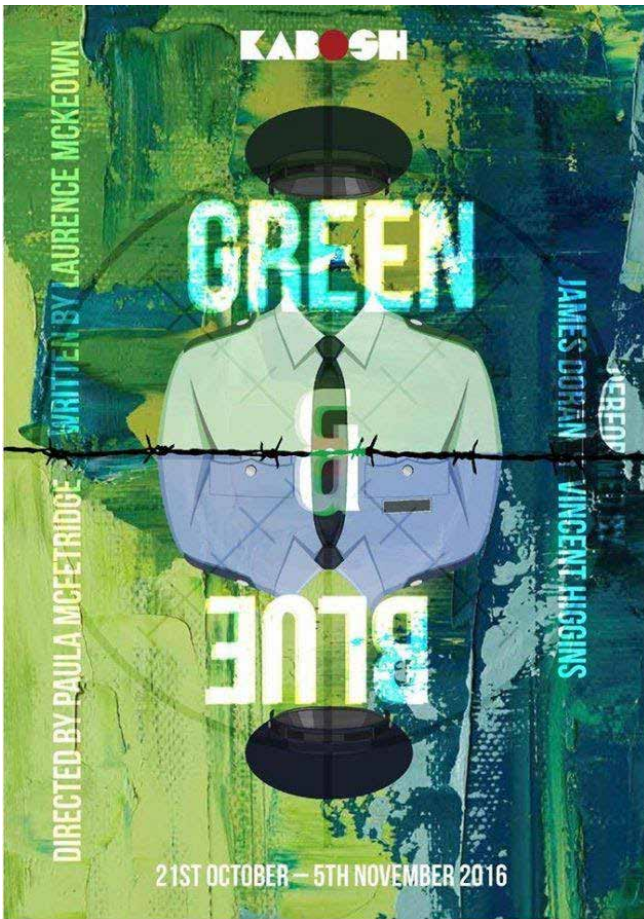
Regarding the question of whether the material is also suitable for dramatic presentation, all of the participants replied affirmatively. The most favored themes identified include:

- The remembrance of past events juxtaposed with the present;
- The sense of impending doom while serving along the border;
- The opportunity to compare and contrast on a cross-border basis;
- The close proximity of the two forces contrasting with the gulf between them;
- Contradictions between the personal lives and their lives on duty;
- Naivety of the young officers and the reality of life on duty;
- Exploration of internal conflicts and moral dilemmas; and,
- Loneliness, isolation, humanity, ordinary and extraordinary lives.

Understandably, opinions differed in regards to the format. There was an option for theatre, an option for film, and an option for a combination of both.

- **A full scale theatrical production.** This has been tried and tested in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and elsewhere, as a creative way of looking at contentious issues. It can be attached to a process of writing and acting workshops in order to tease out the issues; assess the outcomes for actors, audience and storytellers; and, refine and optimize theatrical impact. A production such as this could tour and maximize the audience and the outcomes.
- **A short film.** Again, this is a well-utilized vehicle for dealing with contested issues. Film allows the director to build an atmosphere, blur boundaries, and move between past and present. Whether in the cinema or on TV, film is the most accessible of the communication media and potentially achieves the greatest outcomes.
- **A combination of theatre and film.** Elements of a theatrical production can be filmed and become part of the workshop process or can stand alone as a dramatic expression. Alternatively, short filmed scenes could become part of the stage production. They could also be used as workshop training materials for policing services. Short filmed scenes can be uploaded to the web and through social media to reach a virtually limitless audience. The IPA international networks would be an important vehicle for the dissemination.

Diversity Challenges and its partners worked to prioritize and further develop a combination of theatre, film, and other programming. The project engaged with a theatrical company, the Kabosh Theatre Company, who had worked in post-conflict drama spaces. The Kabosh Theatre Company developed the script in partnership with all involved with "The Green & Blue Across the Thin Line," Diversity Challenges, the Ireland Section IPA and the RUC George Cross Foundation.



The interface between the arts and the storytelling/oral history genres required careful negotiation. The stories had been collected and the consent enabled them to be published in order for Diversity Challenges to use the stories with third parties. The play, however, was not a direct reflection of the stories, but used extracts and themes from the stories to develop the play.

The development of the play raised a number of potential questions. For example, how would the former police officers view this? They had to convince their colleagues to participate in telling stories and how would they now feel about how the content in the play would portray the police and the stories? Also, would Kabosh and the playwright accept comments and criticism from people outside of the theatrical community?

To manage these issues, Kabosh gave a draft of the script to Diversity Challenges for comment and there was at least one reading of the script to the project management group for feedback. The reading enabled

feedback and community concerns were addressed to achieve the goals of the play and the storytelling project. The outcome was a one-hour long play that the former police officers, the participants, could stand behind. The production of the play, and its promotion, was the responsibility of Kabosh as the theatrical company. Diversity Challenges briefed media outlets on the background of the play and the resulting publicity helped increase audiences for the rest of the performances.



Garda O'Haleron and Constable McCabe RUC from Kabosh production

Diversity Challenges facilitators lead post-performance discussions for each show, which was a critical part of the process. It is important that they were well-acquainted with the project and the participants. The facilitators were all trained story-gatherers; some were former police officers while others were regular facilitators. All attended the performance before the facilitation so that they were aware of the audience's mood and had seen the exact version the audience saw. Feedback was also continuously given to the facilitators about issues that had come up at previous performances.

### 1.3.2.

#### Evaluation

In addition to the post-show dialogue facilitation, there were feedback forms given to the audience for evaluation. The evaluation was carried out by a consultancy firm employed by Kabosh.

#### EVALUATION APPROACH AND PROCESS

##### Three stages were involved in the evaluation process

- Evaluation form design (ask the appropriate questions, appropriate format/ layout/ presentation)
- Evaluation form distribution and collection (at the performances)
- Data input and analysis

To establish what impact, if any, the performance had, the evaluation form asked the audience to answer six questions to indicate their levels of understanding or awareness of issues raised on a scale of 0 – 10; this was done both before and after the performance and the post-show discussion. The questions focused on the overall piece and the issues it attempted to address around The Conflict for border communities. The scale questions were:

- “I understand the nature of the conflict was different for border communities”
- “I am aware of the challenges faced by border communities”
- “I understand the fear the border holds for some communities”
- “I understand how the border fractured local communities on either side”
- “I have a level of sympathy with individuals who were in the police force”
- “I have a positive association with the police force”

The same questions were asked before and after the performance - “before” was chosen to establish the baseline and “after” was chosen to ascertain the impact the performance had. The forms also asked the audience what their overall experience was (on a scale of 0-10):

- “Do you have any other thoughts about your experiences of the play?” (Open question)
- “I feel theatre is a useful way to explore issues from our past”
- “This experience has made me question my opinions”
- “A post show discussion is a valuable way to share this with other people”

For monitoring purposes, the evaluation forms asked the audience members to confirm their gender, age, postcode and email address (email address was optional). The forms were designed to assess if audiences found the performance useful, relevant or challenging and to highlight issues that could be addressed in the future.

The form used is below:



We would appreciate it if you could take a few moments to give us some feedback on the impact that Green & Blue had on you. Your comments will help us to understand whether our performances are useful, relevant and challenging. Your comments may also highlight issues that we might want to address in the future.

### Green & Blue Before Performance

Factor	0 = None 10 = Very High Level
I understand the nature of the conflict was different for border communities	
I am aware of the challenges faced by border communities	
I understand the fear the border holds for some communities	
I understand how the border fractured local communities on either side	
I have a level of sympathy with individuals Who were in the police force	
I have a positive association with the police force	

**What is your gender?** Male  Female

**Which category describes your age?**

Under 18  18-25  26-50  51-65  Over 65

**Where are you a resident?**

Postcode:

**Email Address (Optional):**

**Thank You For Your Cooperation**



As audience members entered the auditorium they were given the evaluation form, or the form was left on each chair. Following the performance, there was a short “comfort break,” then the audience returned for the facilitated post-show discussion. After the show, and again at the end of the discussion, the facilitator asked the audience to complete the evaluation forms.

In total, 340 evaluation forms were gathered, each with twenty questions, which amounted for a substantial amount of data entry and analysis. The approach taken for the analysis was to consider each question in turn and analyze what percentage of the audience chose a particular answer to indicate their levels of understanding or awareness before the performance (in order to establish a “before” baseline); and, then, to repeat this for “after” so that the change (if any) could be measured. However, this method did not allow for measuring individual change. It is possible to tell the change that occurred in the audience as a whole, but the method did not allow identification of whether a person changed their answer to a lower or higher number on the 0 – 10 scale.

The overall impact on the audience was measured to calculate the number of responses received for each answer choice against the total answer choice value, which allowed for a cumulative total. It was then possible to calculate the percentage change in order to measure the impact on the audience. For instance:

<b>“I understand the nature of the conflict was different for border communities.”</b>			
Answer Choices: 0 = None; 10 = Very High Level (Belfast)			
Answer Choice	No. of Respondents		Percentage Change +/- %
	Before	After	
0	2	0	-100%
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	3	0	-100%
5	8	1	-87.5%
6	14	7	-50%
7	8	5	-37.5%
8	15	17	13.3%
9	5	15	200%
10	30	38	26.7%

This did allow Diversity Challenges to arrive at a meaningful percentage and to measure the impact; however, even with the assistance of software the data analysis was still very time-consuming with 340 evaluation forms with 20 questions per form. The limitations of this approach was that, while the evaluation template captured the impact on individual audience members, the current data analysis tool did not allow for efficient analysis of how individual audience members changed their answer choices; therefore, Diversity Challenges was not able to discern which audience member was more or less impacted, if at all, by the performance and post-show discussion.



Will Glendinning Coordinator and Andy Galloway Discuss workshop.

# CONCLUSION

Further details of the *Green and Blue – Across the Thin Line Project* and *Voices from the Vault* including transcripts and audio files of the public stories can be found at [www.green-and-blue.org](http://www.green-and-blue.org).

Diversity Challenges has successfully hosted an accredited training course in Storytelling for 17 people who were facilitators in this project as story-gatherers. The project collected 42 stories from along the border covering as wide a number of subjects as possible from former police officers and their families. Each participant has a transcript of their story and a CD of the audio. The published book has excerpts from 39 stories. Diversity Challenges continues to work with other storytelling projects, including Border Roads to Memory and Reconciliation, Crows on the Wire, Glortha Aduaidhand (Northern Voices) and The Story Telling Network.

The process that has been detailed in this toolkit has evolved over eight years. It has not been an exact science and it may have taken very different turns if repeated.

## **Current lessons learned include:**

- Time to develop trust and partnerships with as many community members as possible and appropriate civil society organizations;
- Respect of all and accepting that storytelling will take longer than originally planned;
- Organizers have to be prepared to change and adapt plans to meet unforeseen circumstances and needs of participants;
- Funders need to that understand the risks and can adapt requirements to meet changing circumstances;
- A peace process is not a finite process with a start and end but ebbs and flows with various communities' needs.



# Green & Blue Across The Thin Line



Members of Diversity Challenges RUC GC and Garda IPA at project conference.

# APPENDIX



**'A project supported by PEACE III Programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Community Relations Council/Pobal Consortium'.**

## Consent Form

Diversity Challenges in partnership with, The George Cross Foundation and the International Police Association Ireland has developed and is delivering a project **'Green and Blue Across the thin line'**. The project is led by Diversity Challenges and has received funding from the Community Relations Council Pobal Consortium for support under the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2007-2014.

The project will run from January 2013 to the end of December 2014

The Green and Blue project provides an opportunity for those who served in the former RUC or the Garda and their families and who were affected by the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, to tell their story and have that story told to others through exhibitions, photography, text, drama, or DVD.

- A briefing paper outlining the background to the project has been given to the interviewee.
- An ethics paper detailing the approach governing the process has been given to the interviewee.
- A transcript of the interview will be provided to the interviewee who will be given an opportunity to amend content, withdraw statements and to provide additional information if (s)he so wishes.
- Only material agreed with the interviewee will be used in Green and Blue
- Those who give a story will be given a transcript of their story for their own use.

By signing this form the interviewee gives consent for the information provided during the interview and the copyright works generated during the interview - whether recorded by note-taking, audio, film, photographic or other means - to be used as part of the 'Green and Blue Across the thin line' project in accordance with the stipulations above and to be:

- archived for public consultation;
- used by third parties with the consent of Diversity Challenges;
- used by The George Cross Foundation;
- used by the International Police Association Ireland.

PLEASE DELETE ANY OF THE FOREGOING WHICH ARE INAPPLICABLE  
Copyright in the foregoing works shall be owned by the interviewee.

This agreement is subject to the laws of Northern Ireland and any dispute relating to this agreement or the interviewee's participation in the project, 'Green and Blue Across the thin line' shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of Northern Ireland.

Name of interviewee (in Block Capitals) .....

Date .....

Signature of interviewee .....

Signature of interviewer .....



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# dc Diversity Challenges

*'A project supported by PEACE III Programme managed for the Special EU Programmes Body by the Community Relations Council/Pobal Consortium'.*

## *Workshop Evaluation Facilitators Feedback*

Facilitator comments on individual interactions

1. Had the individual previously been engaged on the issue of dealing with the past? **Yes/No**

Please provide details

2. The project aims to evaluate how **'Different experiences, memories and legacies of the past have been acknowledged'** as a result of the engagement. Please use the space below to share your views on this.

3. The project aims to evaluate how **'People engaged with the project demonstrate improved levels of trust and tolerance within their community and or between communities'** as a result of the work.

Please use the space below to share your views on this.

4. Is the individual likely to take part in further engagement? (with us or internally/externally) – please provide details

5. Has the work had any other outcome or impact so far? e.g. led the person to undertake further discussion or action?

Please circle **Yes / No / Maybe**

Please elaborate.

6. Please use this space to record any feed back into the work



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Garda O'Halleron and Constable McCabe RUC from Play Green and Blue

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