

# **Good Relations Awards 2023 and T:BUC Engagement Forum**

7<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
10:00 am – 13:30 pm  
Belfast Harbour Commissioner's Office

## **Contributors:**

Jo Scott – Compare, BBC  
Gareth Johnston – Director of Good Relations and Inclusion, The Executive Office  
Martin McDonald MBE – Chair, Community Relations Council  
Chris Gardner - Head of T:BUC & Good Relations Division, The Executive Office  
Dr Paul Nolan – Key Note Speaker

## ***Welcomes and Introduction*** **Gareth Johnston, TEO**

GJ gave a warm welcome to the Good Relations Awards 2023 and the T:BUC Engagement Forum, noting it was a pleasure to have attendees in person and in such a beautiful and historic venue.

GJ provided an overview of the day and added he was looking forward to hearing from the keynote speaker, Dr Paul Nolan, on the census data as well as exploring how the T:BUC strategy has helped to shape and transform society over the last ten years.

GJ said the Engagement Forum will provide an opportunity to reflect on achievements but also stimulate thinking on how Good Relations may help to further build united, sustainable communities.

GJ explained the Community Relations Council and The Executive Office were introducing an expanded Awards programme, and, in collaboration with NICVA, NI Youth Forum, Volunteer Now and The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland; the Awards showcased Good Relations and Peace Building excellence across five categories. The awards were created in partnership with the Community Arts Partnership (CAP) and through this partnership four new 2023 Good Relations Awards categories were created. The sustainable awards were made from recycled glass and wood. The wood used in the awards was from the roof of St Patrick's Cathedral in New York following a renovation in 1984.

GJ said that CAP had invited local writers to reflect on the values of Good Relations for the Good Relations Awards 2023 through haiku included the overall theme of Good Relations & Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) "Changing for the better, together": Respect Rights Sharing Tolerance Responsibilities Cohesion

Diversity Fairness Inclusion Integration Interdependence. He told attendees that information on the haiku, a type of short form poetry originating from Japan, was available on the Good Relations Awards website.

## **Good Relations Awards 2023**

### **EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

The Community Relations Council Exceptional Achievement Award has been awarded annually since 2006, this Award recognises those individuals instrumental in developing new pathways to peace and reconciliation, demonstrating sustained and long-term commitment to community relations work across the region.

#### **Runner up 1 - Mary Hogg**

JS provided a brief commentary on Mary; Mary has been at the forefront of women's issues and empowerment in Mid Ulster for 23 years. Very much an advocate for Peace, Reconciliation & the peace Agreements. She has taken many personal risks in promoting good relations in Mid Ulster. She has encouraged those in isolated and single identity and faith communities to come together. She has encouraged those that had lost loved ones during the conflict to reach out to the 'other side' and to understand the roots and origins of the conflict. Mary risked her own reputation in much of her work. There were those in her community that resisted this type of community work. Nevertheless, Mary continued to take risks to build a better, safer more inclusive community.

#### **Runner Up 2 – Maureen O’Gorman**

JS provided a brief commentary on Maureen; From the inception of Maureen's career in youth work young people have been supported to participate in Good relations programmes, Latterly with a greater emphasis on T:BUC, Maureen has the developed the capacity of a huge range of youth workers, teachers, young people, and organisations to develop Good relations programmes and enhance the learning experience for young people. This has a massive impact on the youth work sector, schools, and the wider society in Northern Ireland. Hundreds of individuals with a greater understanding of the conflict, their background and how they can contribute to a more peaceful society. Maureen's work has been inspirational to many.

#### **Winner – Angila Chada, MBE**

JS Provided a brief commentary on Angila; In the past few weeks Angila Chada has received her MBE. She has made an exceptional contribution to peacebuilding and Good Relations. She has dedicated her life's work to promoting inclusion and diversity and creating opportunities for those that need it most. A visionary and a change maker, Angila has been at the forefront of peacebuilding at a grassroots level for over 30 years leading with passion and determination. She is humble yet formidable in her pursuit of a more inclusive, diverse, accepting, and peaceful society for all.

She has shown extraordinary commitment to building a society that develops and strengthens capacity, promotes citizenship, better values diversity and increases mutual appreciation across all people. And as a result of her leadership, it has transformed the lives of thousands of young people, their families, and communities. Angila said she was very humbled and gratified to receive the award. She thanked CRC and TEO for their support. She added working for 31 years with over 14,000 young people, was something she couldn't have done by herself. She thanked her Board for their support and most particularly the young people who have given her the privilege of working and walking alongside them for 31 years. In conclusion she thanked the Springboard staff for their good craic, passion, and integrity.

Angila, Maureen, and Mary joined JS for a group photo.

### **VOLUNTEER AWARD**

These awards were presented by Denise Hayward, CEO of Volunteer Now. In association with Volunteer Now, this award recognises the outstanding commitment of volunteer focussed and dedicated good relations programmes and initiatives in local areas, developing mutual respect and understanding, strengthening diversity, and enhancing the celebration and embracing of diversity.

#### **Runner up 1 - Hazel McGuigan**

JS provided a brief commentary on Hazel; Hazel McGuigan has dedicated her life to helping others, promoting understanding, and breaking down barriers. She is an exceptional community ambassador with a passion for affecting change. As Chairperson of Campsie Community Association, she voluntarily manages the Campsie Hub which offers a full weekly timetable of activities including mental health programmes, arts and crafts, multi-cultural projects, youth initiatives, community drop in facilities and a community gardening project. Hazel is an outstanding leader who represents the community sector on several regional groups, fearlessly lobbying for the betterment of the general Omagh area. She is an active member of Fermanagh and Omagh Interfaith group and chairs the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership in Omagh. She works closely with a wide number of community and statutory organisations and makes a very positive contribution to building positive relations across all sections of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

#### **Runner up 2 – Mukesh Shugh**

Unfortunately, Mukesh was unable to join the event.

JS provided a brief commentary on Mukesh; Mukesh has begun many energetic Projects with other community leaders and Good Relation office of Derry City and Strabane District Council. Muktesh has initiated a Community Group, Indian Hindu Association which has successfully organised many festivals and community gatherings He has been conducting workshops/lecture/projects in schools and college for a number of years; about Indian art, culture, and heritage to promote Interfaith Harmony. He was one of the pioneer members who helped the Western Trust in establishing Ethnic Diversity Staff Network and later he was elected as the Chair of this forum.

## **Winner - Adekanmi Abayomi**

Jo provided a brief commentary on Adekanmi; Adekanmi Abayomi is the Founder and Chair of EMSONI - Ethnic Minority Sports Organisation Northern Ireland. As a long-term racial equality activist, he has campaigned to promote good relations and equity through sports. Adekanmi is an astute volunteer with multi awards for his voluntary contributions to the promotion of social action, social justice and community cohesion, diversity in sport and sport development in Northern Ireland. His work with EMSONI and other community led initiatives - is focused on the principles of empowerment, human rights, social inclusion, social justice, self-determination, and collective action. He voluntarily sits on boards of several organisations, including BBC Children in Need Northern Ireland, NI Housing Executive Consultative Forum on Equality and Sport NI Celebrating Diversity Panel.

Adekanmi said he was shocked, but happy to receive the award. He said the award was a testimony that sport can be used as a tool to bring communities together. He said sport was not just about fitness or competition, but as a force to bring people together in a connected way. He said thanks to the CRC and all their partners. He thanked EMSONI who he said had made him a better person. Adekanmi said thanks to those who supported the initiative as well as the friends, colleagues and volunteers who have supported EMSONI.

Hazel and Adekanmi joined Denise and JS for a group photo.

## **YOUTH AWARD**

These Awards were presented by Eoin Millar from Northern Ireland Youth Forum. This Award recognises and celebrates young people delivering positive good relations work in their community and across the region.

## **Runner up 1 - Rhianna Brown and Martha McCallion of Young People in Care Young (VOYPIC) Women's group**

Jo provided a brief commentary on Voice of Young People in Care Women's group; Rhianna Brown and Martha McCallion are here from VOYPIC to pick up the certificate of recognition. The Young Women's group includes women from all areas of Belfast, who live with foster carers, in children's homes, and in independent living projects. Some of these young women live in areas that do not traditionally align with their community background.

There are also several unaccompanied asylum-seeking young women who find navigating the unique social and political landscape of this place challenging. Through the project, the young women have had the opportunity to build friendships and get to know their community, and the communities around them. The group allows for the women to learn and embrace other cultures, religions, and traditions, by having difficult conversations with each other, using learning from the T:BUC project they have been involved in.

## **Runner up 2 – St John’s Primary School and Killowen Primary School**

St John’s PS - Helen McDonnell (Principal) with pupils Conor Dougan and Ronan Florida - James

Killowen PS -Arlene Moon (Principal) with pupils Leah McMullan and Kendal – Leigh McCrellis.

JS provided a brief commentary on St John’s Primary School and Killowen Primary School in Coleraine; highlighting that the schools are shared education partners and work together regularly on good relations and community cohesion projects.

The Principals Helen McDonnell and Arlene Moon work tirelessly to promote their shared ethos and have developed a very successful and fruitful relationship between the schools in their work to create and celebrate mutual understanding and community cohesion. There is a real commitment from the pupils and the teachers to advance Good Relations in the area and they recognise their part in this, participating fully and enthusiastically in bringing their learning out into the wider community.

The schools’ relationship is an excellent example of active and ongoing Good Relations work Their pledge to each other; "to understand and respect differences, to offer smiles, support and respect others, build bridges between our schools and to listen and talk through our difficulties."

### **Winner - Aaron Smith**

Unfortunately, Aaron was unable to join the event.

JS provided a brief commentary on Aaron, explaining that Aaron couldn’t attend the event as he is part of the Human Rights Network for Commonwealth Games and has been asked to attend the Commonwealth Youth Summit in London for two weeks. As part of that, he's been invited to Buckingham Palace for Commonwealth Day with His Majesty King Charles attending the Garden Party.

Aaron has been involved in Youth work for over 6 years, having been initially a Young Leader then an Ambassador on the Uniting Communities through Sport and Creative activities T:BUC Programme. He has now gone full circle in his leadership and good relations journey having now secured employment as a Youth Mentor on the T:BUC Uniting Communities South Belfast Programme.

Pros

Aaron has worked as a youth worker in both voluntary and community sectors across all communities in Northern Ireland and is currently developing an international programme for Cyprus, which aims to promote human rights and inclusion through sport. Aaron took part in One Young World in 2022, where he spent one week in Washington DC completing homelessness awareness and working directly with homeless shelters to provide a service.

Aaron has been good enough to record a short video which we can play now.

Aaron said it was an immense honour for him to receive this award for his contribution to United Communities, a fantastic programme which builds relationships between communities across Northern Ireland. Aaron deeply regretted not being there in person but expressed his heartfelt gratitude to CEC and T:BUC in recognising the importance of promoting peace and reconciliation through engagement. Aaron explained he had participated on the programme, and he has experienced first-hand the power of dialogue, respect and understanding. He is honoured to help other young people enjoy the benefit of building relations across the divides. Aaron said he felt a responsibility to continue the work of creating a more inclusive society. He dedicated the award to United Communities and those colleagues who make the programme a success.

### **COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARD**

These awards were presented by Geoff Nuttall from the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA).

In association with NICVA this Award recognises the long-standing and positive difference an individual has made to supporting good relations in their local area. This person is the driving force and leader for good relations in their local area, championing the community, bringing others on the good relations journey.

#### **Runner up 1 - Orla Hawkins**

JS provided a brief commentary on Orla; Orla is a youth leader with New Lodge Arts. She has facilitated amazing groups of young people from the Ardoyne/New Lodge area and Shankill area to meet every week to build relations and trust amongst each other through T: BUC programmes. Orla has provided a space where young people are confident to share their living experiences and build friendships through team outings, in house meetings, discussions and activities.

#### **Runner up 2 - Mary Lafferty**

JS provided a brief commentary on Mary; Mary Lafferty, based in Omagh, Co. Tyrone, has made an outstanding contribution to building good relations in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area. She is an exemplary good relations community champion who leads by example. She has been to the forefront of cultural diversity work primarily with the Syrian community, and now with the Ukrainian refugees. She provides practical support, education, signposting, mentoring, and leadership. She worked with the new communities, and the local community to foster respect and understanding. She has knowledge, compassion, and empathy for each person she meets, going above and beyond to make life better for all. She truly deserves this award.

#### **Winner – Nicole Sloan**

JS provides brief commentary on Nicole; Nicole is a Radius Housing tenant living in a Shared Housing development built as part of the T:BUC 'Housing for All' Strategy. She is passionate and promotes culture, diversity, acceptance, respect and understanding through themes including health & wellbeing, arts and culture, advice

and advocacy and training, education, and employment. Encouraging engagement from all sectors of the community to live together in one space respectfully. Nicole has tirelessly given her time freely to the community and championed the cause of good relations over the past 3 years. She builds the capacity of others as well as being on her own personal development journey, making a positive impact, changing attitudes, and providing invaluable support to many. She is a driver of change and steadfast in her aim to create a more inclusive, diverse, and respectful society for the future.

Nicole said she was grateful and honoured to have won. She gave thanks to Radius Housing, adding if it wasn't for their building the shared community housing, she wouldn't be there today. She said thank you to the Social Change Group and hoped that moving forward hopefully Belfast will become a more diverse and inclusive place to live.

Orla, Mary, and Nicole join JS and Geoff Nuttall for a group photo.

### **CONNECTED COMMUNITY AWARD**

These awards are presented by Michael Hughes from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI). In association with the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland this Award recognises a group of local people who have formed a project or delivered an activity that brings the community together, benefiting others in their neighbourhood.

#### **Runner up 1 - TADA Rural Support Network**

Geraldine Lawless, Chair

JS provided a brief commentary on TADA; TADA Rural Support Network is a voluntary community group made up of 10 voluntary board members. TADA have over 20 years' experience of providing tailored support to identify and meet the needs of local rural community groups. TADA work in partnership and have good positive relationships with a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies as such we can offer better access to services, improve quality of life of rural people; providing training for group development and organise networking events to bring communities together to support rural regeneration. TADA is one of seven Rural Support Network providers in Northern Ireland awarded the DAERA Rural Community Development Support Service contracted to provide local community development support and advice service to the rural communities, supporting the sustainability of vibrant rural communities by providing information, advocacy, capacity building and partnership working.

#### **Runner Up 2 – Limavady High School and St Mary's High School, Limavady**

Principal Rita Moore from St Mary's High School  
Vice Principal Paul Murdoch from Limavady High School

Jo provided a brief commentary on the schools - Limavady High School and St. Mary's, Limavady have a long history of working together prior to any formal

legislative framework of bringing children from different cultural backgrounds together and promoting social cohesion and understanding across the local community. Indeed, it was some of their methodologies which were developed and piloted in the Shared Education Programme now in use across schools from all sectors throughout Northern Ireland. The Limavady Shared Education Campus was developed to deliver greater learning opportunities through shared resources. Each school offers pupils the opportunity to embrace their own cultural identity whilst teaching respect for others through natural dialogue and education opportunities. The diversity and mutual understanding have benefitted the wider community for decades and garnered much political support for the role it plays in creating more opportunities for socially mixed, shared education, which is a crucial part of breaking the cycle of inter-generational educational underachievement, unemployment, and sectarianism, and improving good relations amongst and for our young people.

### **Winner – Dennett Valley Healthy Network**

Damien Divine  
Freddie Brown

Jo provided a brief commentary on the work of Dennett Valley Healthy Network when chat, are being taken Dennett Valley Healthy Network has adopted an old parochial hall that was deemed by one side of the community as a contested space and has now turned it into a shared space we the support of the local community and the three local churches. There are now two poly tunnels on site, a men and hen shed has been established, making woodwork to sell to help sustain their groups. Damien and Freddie have been instrumental in getting these groups the ground and they continue to work tirelessly to promote this area as a shared space. This location was also part of the recent T:BUC trees where they acquire a new piece of land for their expanding allotments and TEO where in attendance for the planting of the tree.

Freddie, Damien, Rita, Paul, and Geraldine join Martin and JS for a group photo.

### **Award Ceremony Closing remarks – Gareth Johnston, TEO**

GJ extended his congratulations to all the award winners adding that was a pleasure to learn more about their important work in creating a more peaceful and reconciled society.

He said the Executive Office wished to acknowledge and celebrate the work everyone is doing in the voluntary and community sector in challenging sectarianism, and racism, by supporting inter-cultural relations.

GJ offered his thanks Jo Scott and the Good Relations Awards partners.

- Geoff from NICVA
- Eoin from the NI Youth Forum
- Denise from Volunteer Now
- Michael from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland



GH also thanked the Community Relations Council who made today's celebration a success. GJ said it was important to continue to build on strengthening the relationship between the CRC through events such as the T:BUC Engagement Forum. Adding, it was important not only to celebrate and share successes but to have the opportunity to challenge the policy and learn from each other.

## ***T:BUC Strategy Update*** **Chris Gardner, TEO**

CG introduced himself and welcomed attendees. He explained that he would be providing an overview of the headline actions under T:BUC.

### **The T:BUC Camps Programme**

- Since 2015, over 26,000 young people have taken part in over 750 Camps.
- Outcome data indicates that 87% of participants made friends with someone from a different religious or community background.
- 82% had a better understanding of other cultural backgrounds after taking part in a Camp.
- 94% of participants felt they gained confidence and new skills.

The T:BUC Trees Programme, provides opportunities to learn more about the environment, and has now expanded into other good relations Programmes including the District Council Programme.

### **The Urban Villages Initiative**

- Working in partnership with communities to deliver a range of successful community led, cross cutting and capital projects since 2016.
- A review by Business Consultancy Services and a Gateway review of Urban Villages have been completed and consideration is being given on how to implement recommendations.
- A one-year extension to funding for UV Community Led and Cross Cutting projects has been agreed in principle and is subject to confirmation of an appropriate budget for The Executive Office for 2023/24.
- Allocated an additional £125k across the five UV areas to support Good Relations work that also helped with the increased Cost of Living.
- Of the 72 capital projects progressing through the Urban Villages capital pipeline, 52 have now completed.
- The capital programme is on course to spend almost £9M this financial year including partnership funding.

### **Peace4Youth Programme**

- Over 7,900 young people completed the programme.
- 3,200 of those availed of the participant incentive payments.
- The Peace4Youth programme exceeded its target and had a clear, positive impact on the young people who have taken part.
- 75% of young people indicated that they had clear plans for their future, with employment being the most popular destination for completers.

- A successor Programme has been developed to exceed the fulfilment of the United Youth commitment. This programme is expected to run from late 2023 until 2028.

### **The T:BUC Interfaces Programme**

- Continues to engage in lots of community engagement to bring forward potential interface reduction or removal schemes.
- continues to deliver what has become known as the '4 Rs' – aiming to Remove, Reduce, Re-image or Re-classify interface structures wherever community consent exists to do so.
- Of the original 59 DoJ-owned 'peace-walls' – erected for 'the preservation of the peace or the maintenance of order'- a third have been removed and a third have been reduced over the years.
- Two solid interface security barriers were recently removed and replaced with automated vehicular and pedestrian access gates which now provide open access for local people 15 hours each day.
- The overall aim is for a Northern Ireland where no child grows up in the shadow of a so called 'Peace Wall', we look forward to further progress in the coming years.

### **Uniting Communities Programme**

- Uses sport, physical and creative activity to break down divisions with an emphasis on tackling sectarianism, racism and promoting equality of opportunity.
- 200 young people from across South Belfast and Lurgan/Portadown
- Led by AB Coaching and Healthy Kids, with Oasis and Wheelworks providing opportunities to explore good relations through a number of creative activities.
- 40 Young Leaders from these areas will shortly complete the OCN Uniting Communities through Leadership level 2 award.
- Planning is underway for the final Embedding Sustainability phase where Young Leaders will design and delivery their own Good Relation programme of activity.
- DfC are currently scoping the potential for rollout of the programme in 23/24 starting with Black Mountain and Castle areas of Belfast followed by Causeway in North Antrim.

### **Shared Housing Programme**

- Investment of £25.4M
- Delivering 69 shared housing developments, totalling 1973 homes.
- Each development is supported through the establishment of an Advisory Group
- 27 Advisory Groups have been established; (some Advisory Groups support several schemes) and 39 Good Relations Plans are in development.

### **Shared Education Campus Programme (SECP)**

- Helped to deliver on the vision for Shared Education and promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.

- Four projects selected are unique and will create new, state of the art, shared education facilities which will afford the children involved every opportunity to enable them to embrace being an adult in a shared society.
- The SECP contribute to the quality of Shared Education provision, improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.

### **TEO's Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF)**

- Provides funding to voluntary and community organisations to deliver good relations projects across Northern Ireland. projects have provided important opportunities for participants to develop new skills, gain qualifications, build self-confidence, and develop new friendships, as well as celebrate and embrace cultural diversity.
- Awarded almost £30m to around 900 good relations projects across Northern Ireland.
- Grown significantly since 2012/13 when it had a budget of £400k, 15 applications with 10 projects awarded funding.
- High value placed on the CGRF, reflected in the increased funding allocation over the last decade with almost £3m allocated annually for the Fund.
- Increase in the applications over the last 10 years. In 2022/23, 209 applications seeking £8m of funding enabled 95 projects.
- Applications to the 2023/24 Central Good Relations Fund closed on 12 January 2023. As in previous years the Fund is heavily over-subscribed, receiving 201 applications seeking almost £7.4m.

CG highlighted that the work across the T:BUC programme is evidently ongoing, and great progress had been made over the last ten years. He added the purpose of the Engagement Forum is to have a two-way conversation between government and the sectors who are delivering the T:BUC Strategy on the ground across communities.

CG welcomed views on progress made to date and encouraged sharing any thoughts on things that could be done differently.

CG thanked attendees for listening and introduced the keynote speaker, Dr Paul Nolan.

### ***Reflecting on the NI Census Data*** **Dr Paul Nolan**

PN thanked JS for the introduction adding it was a pleasure to be in the building, one of his favourites in the city.

PN joked that he may not be giving the most positive presentation, given the encouraging nature of the day, and suggested a 'trigger warning' for the audience.

PN explained that his presentation would focus on one small area of the Census, the 'Usins' and 'Themins' and thanked colleagues at the Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency (NISRA) for their essential administrative data that helps plan for

hospital and schools, for example. PN drew attention to the Pandemic and how it affected the Census this year, noting that both Scotland and Ireland had postponed theirs. NISRA launched an energetic Census awareness campaign which produced a remarkable result of a 97% completion rate with 80% completing their form online.

The online Census form was described by PN as brilliantly designed and he said that while this was the best Census undertaken, it may be the last because NISRA is conducting research to see if it can be done without, given that a Census is costly and now the data gathered from other sources is remarkable. PN said a Census may be missed in Northern Ireland noting that it has now become part of our culture.

PN explained that this year's Census was conducted on the centenary of the foundation of the Northern Ireland State and the decision on the boundaries of the new state was actually based on Census data. From 1912 onwards there was a debate as to where the state would be. It was proposed that it should be made up of four counties and others felt it should be the historic nine counties of Ulster. PN clarified that if that had been the case, the Census data showed that 44% of the population would be Catholic which would not have offered reassurance to the Unionists. It ended up being a six-county state and when the first Census was done, it showed it was exactly right in terms of a 2:1 ratio; the new NI had 34% Catholic population.

In the six counties, by the time of the last Census, Catholics and Protestants were nearly level at 42% and 41%. There was a dip in Catholic population in 1981 and a spike on 'No Religion' due to the Hunger Strikes, when Catholics boycotted the Census. The 2021 Census showed the Catholic population was larger than the Protestant.

The School Census is conducted each year, which is interesting because it is done by self-categorisation. PN shows a slide that shows the Catholic population at just over 50% plus 1. Going back to 2000-2001, the Protestant population was 43.4%. Moving forward 10 years it has dropped to 30.9%.

Those who classify as neither Catholic or Protestant, there is an increase of 5.5% to 18.8%, and PN explained that if you want to know what the next census outcomes will be, we can get them from the school census.

In this census NISRA looked at religion in two different ways. One was religion in a sense of belief and the other was what is community background.

The Catholic population turned out to be larger than the Protestant population. PN drew attention to the people who identified as having 'No Religion'. Ten years ago, it was 10% and in ten years it has jumped to 17.4%, which is in line with what has been happening in the developed world. Secularisation is a big message of the Census; the Australian Census had close to 40% of people with 'No Religion', in England and Wales it is 37.2%. PN said we are following, not leading a trend. Ireland was at 10% in the last Census, and PN was certain they will be above 20% following results of their Census. Data in Scotland suggests it will be around 60%.

In terms of community background, the Catholic population is larger and the Protestant population, not by a large majority.

45.7% were brought up as Catholics and it drops to 42.3% when you talk about belief. The Protestant faith drops a bit more, 43.5%. The other increase is people of 'No Religion' at 9.3%, jumping to 17.4%. Drilling down further into religious affiliations, while the Census reflects the society, it also shapes it. In the English Census they do not have Protestant and Catholics, it is just Christian. PN argued that if Northern Ireland had that, there may be more of a common identify. Twenty years ago, Christianity would have been 99.9%, now at 80%.

Who are the Christians? The Protestant total of 37.4% is made up of Protestants and other Christians. When talking about Ulster Protestants, talking about 30%. At the creation of the NI state the Catholic population was 34% because a minority group's influence would be diminished. It has been argued that the Catholic figure has been inflated by adding people who are not 'real Catholics'. There are people counted as catholic, e.g., the Polish population. In terms of change over a 10-year period, Catholics have gone up by 1.5%, Protestants down by 4.2% and non-religions have shown the greatest increase.

The way in which the Census has been passed into public consciousness, the main dynamic has been the decrease in the Protestant community. The question is where did all the Protestants go?

PN's slides showed that over the last 10 years the population of NI has gone up by 5%, the Protestant population has gone down by 5%. There are 3 main areas:

- 1) The nation demographic decline.
- 2) There has been a significant immigration out of Ireland.
- 3) Those who were born into Protestant communication are no longer describing themselves as protestants.

The previous Census, the British identity accounted for 40%, when the figures were published, there was a shock result; the British identify had dropped to 31.9%. The Irish identity is 29% and the NI is close to 20%. PN explained that when the Census form is filled in, you do not have to be just British or Irish, there is a multitude of options and mixed identities. Some people choose one. 43.4 % from Protestant backgrounds, 32% identify as British. When you add British plus NI or Irish, it rises to 42.8%. In Catholics the drop off is stronger, 45.7% Catholic by background, but 29.1% identity as being Irish. Irish plus rises to 33.3%, showing there are unwelcome results for Nationalism and Protestantism.

Hybrid identities, the one everyone wants to partner with, PN explained. is the Northern Ireland option. Where British and NI are 7% of the population . If you take the NI identity and the hybrid, together they account for 33.2% of the population more than Unionism or Nationalism. PN asks, where does this leave us? There are still two teams, but there is now a third team. The hybrid identities, they do not allow enough headroom for an exclusive Irish or British majority in a foreseeable future. PN said we are all minorities. Dominance is not an option for anyone, but the desire for dominance is still the driving force of politics in Northern Ireland.

What was the effect of Brexit? Brexit was an earthquake across Europe, particularly in England. What was the effect on NI? PN's expectation was that it would increase the Irish identity, and it did, a bit, it went 25.3% to 29.1%.

PN concluded by saying there was more data to come from the Census which would allow cross tabulation of identity and sexuality, which would be interesting.

JS thanks PN for making that level of data so interesting and introduced the T:BUC Tales section of the day.

## **T:BUC + 10 Transformation Tales Panel Discussion**

### **Panel:**

Angila Chada, Executive Director, Springboard  
Gareth Harper, Managing Director, PeacePlayers  
AJ McMinn, PeacePlayers

Angila is the Executive Director of Springboard. She was also the recipient of the CRC Exceptional Achievement Award 2023. Springboard has been round for over 30 years, its work contributing to a society that is inclusive and values mutual understanding and diversity, empowering people and communities and nurturing growth where the future offers choices, opportunities, and advantages.

Gareth took up the position of Managing Director with PeacePlayers in March 2009, having previously worked as Programmes Manager with a regional rural community development organisation. PeacePlayers use, for example, Basketball to create opportunities for young leaders to promote respect and mutual understanding.

AJ McMinn grew up in a predominately Protestant area of North Belfast. Her involvement in sport, including PeacePlayers and her participation in the T:BUC Young Leadership programme have enabled AJ to build new relationships, further her education and enjoy new sports. AJ is currently completing an MSc at Ulster University and plays Camogie with East Belfast GAA.

### **JS Angila, from your perspective, what has been the most impactful aspects of T:BUC delivery over the last ten years.**

I am going to go, not so much the programmes of delivery mechanisms, I am going to the strategy talked about 2013, which was laying the foundations. There were two aspects to that that have made a difference, one is that it had critical mass in terms of numbers and themes, and cross sector work. It involved central and local government and agencies and communities. That in its design and delivery has been significant in relation to what has happened in the last 10 years.

The other aspect has been the way the programme delivery has been worked out. It hasn't been prescriptive. It has allowed practitioners to deliver right across sports, arts and a variety of sectors that were spoken about today. Giving us that critical

mass and that volume and spreading out across society has been significant and unbelievable. Obviously there has been a lot around programme design and delivery, for me they are the two corner stones that when the strategy is redeveloped, because it needs to evolve, they are the two aspects that must stay. The ability to access the programme flexibly and the ability of diversity.

**JS – Gareth, looking back over the last 10 years what have been the challenges.**

We got very excited in 2013 when sport was identified as one of the key areas as a tool for positive relations. We had a case study in for the work PeacePlayers were doing at the time with IFA, GAA, and Ulster Rugby. Sport back then really wasn't seen as a key tool, so that acknowledgement was really important and off the back of it the CRC engaged with us and funded PeacePlayers. The big challenges for me, not so many challenges, I have seen the opportunities that T:BUC has provided. T:BUC has become a brand now. I think it created an opportunity and the delivery mechanisms were always there. I am a poor substitute for Aaron Smith, but for me there was just lots of opportunities.

Usual challenges are around funding, single year funding for most of the time. I think we had 6 T:BUC applications last year and 11 this year. Also, just the nature of the work had changed a lot, when I first came to PeacePlayers, there was a fear of good relations because it felt that it would distract from community relations, but I have noticed that it has come full circle. One of the other big learning has been around leadership and progression route. AJ has been part of that pipeline. Lots of work is happening out there and making the connection between those connections.

**JS – AJ, you spoke at engagement forum in 2020, you have been a participant in T:BUC over the year. How has it been of support to you.**

I started when T:BUC funded PeacePlayers and from PeacePlayers to the young leader to young ambassadors. It shaped my teenage years. I was having conversations in school; I went to Girls Model. Being able to sit in the common room and ask questions. During lock down and taking the skills I had, I saw the GAA were creating a cross community camogie team. It has shaped me into who I am. It had given me the tools to challenge people, not always about religion, but their perspective. What is the catalyst in people's brain to make them think that that.

**JS – AJ, how has it changed you as a person.**

I was walking with the Pride of Ardoyne on 12<sup>th</sup> July, protestant through and through, and going to the Church of Ireland twice on a Sunday. Protestant was the core of me and my family's being. I usually have Rachel beside me, it has be about growing up and saying I don't actually agree with you. I encourage my family to talk about things and I explain things to my granny about Catholics and Protestants coming together. I have become a spokesperson in my family and friend group about community and good relations. I brought three of my friends to a Gaelic match last week. I drove three friends to watch Cliftonville and watching Camogie for the first time in their life.

**JS - It must take courage.**

I don't think it does, I am just playing sport, I am just standing on the pitch. If taking a bit of courage takes Northern Ireland a step further, then I am willing to take a bit of courage with my granny.

**JS - Do you think young people still appreciate the need for community building efforts.**

I don't think they have become complacent; they don't see it as a big thing. I remember PeacePlayers coming to my primary school when I was 8 years old. I remember the first time Holy Cross girls came to my school. We had girls who were not allowed to take part because their families were against it. Now working with PeacePlayers and going back to my old school, St. Louise's are in Girls Model gymnastics hall, it is now no big deal. It's not complacently, we want it because it is normal. Siobhan isn't different from me because she had a fada in her name. Now that young people have had it ingrained in them, it is just their normality. I speak for myself and my friends, we are just over it. We want people to get on with it. In the nicest way possible, grow up. Let's have some craic together and play basketball and Camogie together and lets live out lives. Being green or orange doesn't make us any less of a person. My daddy is a DC fan, and I am a Marvel fan, it doesn't make me hate him. We are going to have different opinions, but you can teach me about your world. I remember Rachel told me about her money for her Confirmation. We just want people to learn from each other and make Northern Ireland as good as we possibly can.

**JS – Angila, how do we safeguard our progress to date?**

One of the big things is we need to increase the bandwidth of T:BUC. The stories of diversity that run alongside, we need to be looking at creating a narrative that is about us all of us, and that means everyone in Northern Ireland. We have to look at that.

**JS- Gareth, Give us your thoughts on the future and what you would like to see,**

It is people like AJ and Arron who will make a difference. The casual sectarianism is so rife, it is my generation, this older generation that is holding this generation back. I am not sure our generation are even able to do that. These young people are stripped of that baggage completely. They need people to work with to shape a better future.

**JS – Gareth, what do you think that looks like?**

I think there is work to be done around people getting to know each other, we need to create those opportunities. Only 7% of kids go to integrated schools, we educate out kids separately. We need opportunities for engagement. To meet each other when they are 7 years old to remain friends until they are young adults. We need to think about what we are doing from preventing this from happening. At some point it is time for us to move aside and share our knowledge, but learn from the experts and learn from the next generation.



**JS – AJ, what is your wish list, what would you like us to take away from today?**

I don't really know. You always say that I am inspirational, I told Peter, this is just my life and how I live my day to day. For the kids I work with, is just giving them a Northern Ireland I am proud to leave behind, that in 50 years from now that I am happy, I did my bit, the place isn't burning, there isn't a disaster the kids can be kids and NI is better than when I came into it. Even when I entered it, in 2000, even seeing how my areas had changed, be the change you want to see. Don't sit on your hands, take an idea, and run with it. Don't hold back, life is too short to carry a backpack of hate on your back. Make NI a little bit brighter, today, and tomorrow. Any questions from the floor:

To AJ – I think the way you articulate yourself is brilliant. I wish more people, especially the older generation, would listen to young people like yourself and listen to the way you simplify things. You said something very profound, and I hope people took it on. You said it was a challenge to express some of these things, but you just did it. The point I wanted to make is that your attitude is exactly the attitude we need in this country. Talking to people who look and sound different is new to me, but it is as simple as just do it. I thank you for your articulation and your passion.

AJ said if it wasn't for PeacePlayers and T:BUC she wouldn't have the just do it attitude.

**It is a quick elemental question. But how can we shrink the fires. Fires belong to all of us, everyone. My good friend beside is a native of this town, I am not, he cautioned me on the fire tour and said it was not safe. How can we shrink the fires?**

Angela – by doing what we are doing right now. What has been witnessed in this room and stories and statistics. It's keeping doing what we are doing. There are so many peace builders right across NI, who have done so much, much of the time unseen. I just believe so much that if we keep doing what we are doing. We have achieved so much over the last few years. You have to believe that.

JS – And don't carry a backpack of hate.

JS thanked Panel members and introduced the table group discussions.

## Group Table Discussion and Feedback

- 1) What was the key, stand out point, for you from Paul Nolan's presentation?
- 2) About the evidence presented by Paul Nolan and the input from the panel - What new actions do we need to take now and in the future to build good relations here?
- 3) Considering the work that you do, what do you think are the best ways to show how Good relations connects in with other issues?

### Question 1 (Blue Stickers) – Secularisation

- Growth in hybrids
- Move away from religion.
- 40/40/20 split nobody has the majority – there never will be one majority.
- People moving away from religion and politicians may be out of touch i.e., anti-gay.
- People are over “Catholic v's Protestant – I am neither.
  
- The key, stand out stat is 40/40/20.
- Simple but encompasses our society and would work.
- PUL/CNR not a binary issue – more complex.
- We are a society of minorities.
  
- The census questions address the division.
- Census results can inflame community tensions.
- Time to stop separating people by religious and political labels.
- Sustainable funding – does division pay.
  
- Hybrid future society 40/40/20
- Ethnicity to be inclusive.
- Sexuality.
- Labelling can be divisive.
- More options on the evaluation sheets needed.
- The ability to self-identify.
- The reduction in protestant numbers.
- Stats matter
  
- Rise of the hybrids
- The numbers are more balances than initially thought.
  
- When the statistics are explained they tell a different tale than the media portray
- We are a society of minorities.

- The “others” is not a weak identity but a strong hybrid.
- Communication of change
- People missing out the online process for census – illiteracy on line (minority ethnics, seniors)
- We are all a minority and there is no majority.
- 1981 – boycott of census
- Capturing and documenting the journey of young people who go to England for Uni and settle there.
- Understanding of the other bracket
- Minority
- The rise of the 20% non-single identity
- After looking at the stats the thought or vision of a United Ireland does not seem as achievable – different to what the politicians say.
- 40/40/20 – good to see more of the other.
- The Protestant brain drain and impact for politics socioeconomics and those left behind.
- Widening of this data is needed. The stats of this event emphasised beyond green and orange, but date really concentrated on it.
- 40/40/20 informing future of NI and resourcing of good relations.
- Those identifying as no religion.
- 40/40/20 these stats don’t translate to politics.
- More people identifying as Northern Irish (hybrid)
- Paul Nolan’s presentation the new paradigm and how to approach the change.
- 40/40/20 ration
- More information about ethnic minority groups and also include representation from EU countries for example.
- The Brexit impact around census and how data are collected (Malina Romanian Sunday Schools Belfast BIRC)
- Hybrids here we come BRI-IRISH!!
- More promotion of the hybrids
- Where to see Parades go
- Hybrid! St Patricks, St Bridget’s, PRIDE – It is out there – If It’s on parade.
- 40/40/20 well done.

- Good to see rise of Northern Irish identity it seems to be a next generation identity.
- Did Brexit “squash” it? By re-prioritising or bigging up poll – are British OR Irish
- How to make/celebrate Hybridism
- Equilibrium/shades of hybridism

## Q2 (Purple stickers)

- Increase bandwidth of T:BUC
- Change how we use S75 to inclusive actions.
- Funding – issues of access to T:BUC funding for young people
- Employability as an Outcome
- Longer term funding for projects that work not just year to year.
- Create a structure in the communities who are welcoming.
- GR – too short programme only lasts 3 weeks – need long term programmes.
- Building Shared Housing is very important.
- Our generation needs to shift their minds and move to integrated education.
- Political leadership
- More cultural awareness in the community centre
- Importance of experience – case studies and stories to highlight the data.
- Further sessions on data and census – greater understanding of population
- Sustained contact – increased programmes to enable.
- More opportunities for engagement
- Raising confidence
- Parental engagement
- Longer term funding – complete folly to fund for one year.
- Providing young people with the tools to facilitate their own progression.
- Continue to support more diverse communities and expand involvement beyond orange and green communities.
- Engage with communities for design.
- Also needs to reach out to the 20 community.
- Create more funding opportunities.
- Create cohesion.
- Work alongside other organisations if the focus is on other issues.
- Increased co-ordination across themes and strategies etc
- Giving young people a voice in developing policy
- Future leaders

- Engage “other” that currently aren’t engaged politically or with the community.
- Pilot programmes or research or incentivising those hardest to reach.
- Integrated education must be a priority.
- Integrated education capacity – can most/all families access?
- Including the other/hybrid more
- Make projects more inclusive – not just about two communities.
- Ethnic minorities are a part of good relations and need a bigger focus.
- Successful peaceful projects that have worked and share expertise.
- Focus on communities left behind.
- More Council and civic reps from the minority ethnic background – more women
- Young people’s voices need to be more present.
- Stop making it separate and bring them in to all forums.
- Evaluation is creating division and unnecessary box ticking – we are hearing more complaints asking about duplication. For example, to tick a box for religion.
- We are missing valuable thoughts and feelings.
- Boxing in identities
- Fear within communities about their identity/their concerns – where do they get their information from – vulnerability.
- What has single identity funding achieved?
- Young people – support and getting them involved in community work – start in schools, get children together.
- Hard to reach audiences.
- Good relations have to be intentional – Be real – recognise the risks – H&S for trips etc.
- Responsibility of leaders
- Develop an umbrella group of these good relations services/projects – something where funding is maximised so that services can deliver their capacity e.g., child uses youth service, sport, education – all good relations but comes under one service.
- Removing the 60/40 split required by projects to achieve and change it to 40/40/20.
- Monitoring of good relations work
- Stop asking about protestant and catholic. Ask about faith background and cultural background and self-identity.
- Are minority framework useful ways to go?

- More involvement in Shared Housing/Shared Education and support for shared communities
- More education around equality and diversity and interdependence
- Create more opportunities for young people in communities to come together. Too many don't have the opportunity. How do we make it more of a norm?
- Annual funding changed to long term – 3 or 5 years to develop services.
- Continuing to invest in the current successful good relations programmes/projects.

### Question 3 – Pink stickers

- Engaging hybrid voice/youth/people classifying as other
- Targets for funding needs to be more representative of current society.
- GR – woven into day-to-day life.
- Common focus/shared interest focus – GR as a result of the process
- Showcasing what we do – be proud.
- Information language and myth busing re intersection of GR work with BME, LGBT
- Employability
- Mapping and data sharing
- Cost of living has impacts and blocks participation – funding.
- Make accidental outcomes more intentional.
- Embedding GR into work e.g., equality screenings, evaluations etc
- Link into work on other programmes such as mental health
- City of Belfast reflects the barriers we face e.g., transport and architecture barriers to population moving – can't get from west to fair side.
- Create GR glossary.
- Increased promotion of GR – awareness
- GR isn't a buzzword – it's a way of life.
- Socio economic issues needs to be tackled – to make room for good and robust good relations work.
- Strong political and community leadership
- Voice for youth and what issues are on their radar.
- Ensure linkages across policy areas.
- Cost of division – promotion of more sharing in all aspects of life
- Better/smarter investment

- Being more inclusive to show that peacebuilding is more than orange and green.
- Evidence this in work to highlight – required for funding applications.
- Research and insight needed.
- Additional opportunities for learning from others.
- More Young people gravitate to these issues – climate change, mental health, cost of living.
- Continue work with CYP.
- Connecting 5 different areas of T:BUC together
- Schools – wider community – have they heard of T:BUC
- Promotion – how to reach rural groups – exposure to GR.
- Cost of living, running a hall to hold events, and knowing about funding strategy.
- Documenting projects from start to finish.
- Re-designing the current evaluations to include other issues, rather than just catholic and protestant e.g., while on this project have you met anyone who identifies as LGBTQI+
- Communication – how voices get out into society.
- Use of social media to influence others.
- Widening the delivery
- GR definitions equals cohesion.
- Positive mental health
- Education
- More harmonised health and exclusive environments on both Irelands – between North and South and between NI/Ireland and UK
- The mechanisms are there – NS Ministerial and British Irish Council
- Cross cutting
- Holistic approach to the work we are doing.
- Case studies from local communities working at local level.
- GR strong issue for community development
- Community planning – need to uplift the good examples of relationship building at a local level – as encouragement, learning and as examples of local leadership.
- Efforts to encourage people to be more open minded.
- Bringing people together and what if they do
- Continuity of work ?? the narrative of us
- Having follow up to groups.
- Having a longer-term approach – 10-year approach

## **Closing Remarks – The Executive Office**

GJ thanked JS and offered congratulations to all the nominees and winners of the awards; he also offered thanks to all the presenters.

GJ's immediate takeaway from the presentations and discussions, was that he liked the phrase 'increase the bandwidth of T:BUC'. He agreed with PN that we did not get the opportunity to get into the statistics from the Census on nationality and racial background but highlighted that while 3.4% of us are from different racial backgrounds, this can be misleading now for various reasons.

In terms of 'baggage' being added to the new generation, GJ wondered what the learning points were there that were relevant to good relations and asked how do we start to build a trauma informed society in Northern Ireland.

The wider impact that GJ said good relations can have, is meeting others and meeting role models, not just about good relations outcomes. He recalled that he was with the ESRC Ireland wherein they discussed the economic differences in productivity between north and south. Some of the conclusions to that were about aspiration and the opportunity for young people to look at someone and say that can be me. GJ said how you can see how one piece of work can impact economy, wellbeing, and education for example, that are linked to good relations.

In conclusion GJ stated 'be the change you want to see' and asked how can we role model what we want to see as the Northern Ireland of the future, in terms of how we do things ourselves. As his Sunday school teacher preached, "when you point the finger, there are always three fingers pointing back at you".

GJ thanked attendees for joining in on the day, especially in person. He assured the audience that government values the hard work and commitment that had been illustrated today. The next Engagement Forum will be in June 2023.

The Forum concluded at 13:30 pm