
Maryanne Cullinan

A Personal Peace: Reconciliation on an Individual Basis for the Children and Families of Northern Ireland

Project Goals

- ◆ Work within Corrymeela to create a safe space for people to have conversations about their fears and prejudices
- ◆ Help create an environment of fun where people who have suffered severe trauma simply can have a good time away from stress and fear

Personal Goals

- ◆ Gain an understanding of the history of the conflict and how that history affects people today
- ◆ Help people find the strength to try new things in new ways
- ◆ Understand the way that Corrymeela works, both on a day-to-day level and as a vehicle of peace

Activities

- ◆ Participated in and led many activities such as song, dance, ecumenical worship, outdoor activities, and art, which allowed people to become comfortable with one another, have conversations, and try new things.
- ◆ Listened to people of all ages, hearing hopes for the future.

- ◆ Acted as a friend and role model to children, building a safe space that allowed them to be kids and have fun with me and, more importantly, with each other.

Key Dilemmas

- ◆ The passing of trauma can occur between generations—how will people who know trauma as normal be able to function in a society that promotes peace?
- ◆ What practical steps can be taken to alleviate the frustration that Northern Irish people have over ongoing socio-economic inequities that still exist?
- ◆ Will peace occur in a society that continues with segregated schooling?



Arts and crafts provide a creative outlet for children's ideas about coexistence. These children are preparing materials for a worship session about breaking the cycle of violence.

Northern Ireland

Important Learnings

- ◆ In a country this small, affecting even one person can impact the greater society.
- ◆ It takes a great deal of energy and courage to step away from what is "normal" for any given person and to move toward what s/he desires life to be like. But people are willing to make changes. They need support and encouragement.
- ◆ Prejudices and misunderstandings do not go away overnight. Face to face dialogues, however, can help people move beyond their fears to relate on a personal level.



Left: Ideas about community and cultural identity are passed down between generations. This boy, dressed like his father, is participating in a Protestant parade on July 12, 2001, celebrating the victory of William of Orange over James II in 1690. Below: While on a daytrip to the beach town of Portrush, these boys build bridges between their sandcastles and each other.

